



NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS.

# WASHINGTON WEEKLY

July 19, 2013

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## **The VFW Heads to Louisville for the 114th National Convention**

Over 10,000 members are expected when the nation's oldest and largest combat veterans' organization convenes for their 114th VFW National Convention in Louisville, Ky. All Convention activities will stream live beginning Sunday, July 21, and continue Monday, when the Joint Opening Session will feature special award presentations to the Navy SEALs, General Peter Chiarelli and others. During the five-day long Convention, you will also hear from DOD Secretary Chuck Hagel and VA Secretary Eric Shinseki as well as representatives from the Student Veterans of America. If you are attending Convention, the VFW National Legislative Service invites you to join us at our workshop on Sunday, July 21. Stop by our booth and pick up a copy of our critical issues booklet and check out our website and Capitol Hill blog. Currently, we are monitoring more than 120 bills that cover a wide range of issues affecting the military and veterans' community. For a complete schedule of events and live streaming of Convention, [click here](#).

## **IB Testifies on Veterans Funding and Reporting Bills**

On Wednesday, *The Independent Budget* (IB) testified before the House VA Committee on several bills that would require new reporting requirements and fund all VA programs in advance (advance appropriations). Currently Advance Appropriations covers medical care accounts only. *The Independent Budget* veterans service organizations (IBVSOs) partners—AMVETS, DAV, PVA and VFW—discussed their support for [H.R. 813](#), which would fund all VA programs in advance, and also commented on H.R. 806, which would instruct VA to provide annual reports to Congress on the accuracy of VA healthcare funding. Carl Blake, PVA National Legislative Director, presented prepared remarks for the IB, explaining our hesitation on Draft legislation also under review. He commented that the IBVSOs support the idea to regularly revisit VA's priorities and how it delivers services to veterans, but would need to consider the long-term effects of a potential Quadrennial Veterans Review on current business processes. Both the House and Senate consistently acknowledge *The Independent Budget* as a road map to prioritize and fund veterans' programs. The VFW has been a proud member of *The Independent Budget* since its inception more than 27 years ago. To view a full list of witnesses, read their prepared remarks and view an archived webcast of the hearing, [visit our blog](#). For the FY 2014 *Independent Budget* report on VA funding,

[click here.](#)

## House VA Subcommittees Clear Veterans' Bills

On Wednesday, the House VA Subcommittee on Disability and Memorial Affairs' cleared several bills that would change VA's handling of the disability claims backlog. For complete coverage, visit the House VA [website](#).

**H.R. 8026** would allow veterans who have claims for two or more medical conditions to receive payments for the conditions that have been adjudicated while the others are being processed. The bill was amended to include provisions of several other bills, including the *WWII Merchant Marine Service Act*, which recognizes merchant seamen who served from Dec. 7, 1941, through Dec. 31, 1946. The bill provides burial benefits; appropriate medals, ribbons and other military decorations; and veterans status.

**H.R. 2189** would create a commission to study the claims backlog, recommend solutions and require VA to consider those solutions. It also requires the commission to assign a subcommittee to study any anticipated surge in appeals, and asks VA to implement recommendations from a January 2013 VA strategic plan so that by Memorial Day 2015, each claim is approved or denied within 125 days.

**H.R. 2423** extends VA's ability to use private physicians under contract to conduct disability physicals. It also sets priorities within the disability claims process, with priority given to veterans who are age 70 or older; terminally ill; have life-threatening illnesses; are homeless, Medal of Honor recipients or former prisoners of war; or whose claims are being reviewed again in relation to a previously denied claim for military sexual trauma.

## VA Committee to Discuss MST Care and Treatment

Today, the House VA Subcommittee on Health will hold a hearing entitled "Safety for Survivors: Care and Treatment for Military Sexual Trauma." Joy Ilem, Deputy National Legislative Director for DAV, will present testimony on behalf of the *Independent Budget* (IB). Members of the committee have been vocal in their support for improving the care and treatment that VA and DOD provide survivors of military sexual trauma. We continue to express our hope that incidents of sexual assault are being effectively addressed by DOD. The testimony being given mirrors articles in the IB that advocate for greater collaboration between VA and DOD to identify best practices related to healthcare delivery and claims processing for conditions associated with military sexual trauma. The hearing will [air live](#) at 10 a.m. (ET). For witness statements, or to view the recorded webcast, visit the House VA [website](#).

## Salute the Korean War 60th

VFW Posts nationwide can help commemorate the 60th anniversary of the signing of the armistice by hosting a "Pancakes for Patriots"-type event on July 27 to salute the service and sacrifices made by so many of our VFW members and their families. The 10 a.m. (ET) ceremony at the Korean War Veterans Memorial will air live on the national networks, with coverage of pre-ceremony events beginning as early as 8 a.m. on the Pentagon Channel and their [website](#). The Korean War Commemoration Committee is especially interested in VFW Posts hosting the breakfast events in Washington, D.C.; the Hampton Roads area of Virginia; La Crosse, Wis.; and in Austin, Birmingham, Louisville, Minneapolis, Nashville, San Antonio and Tucson. [Check out](#) our breakfast planning guide. [Click here](#) for more information on the 60th anniversary.

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](mailto:vfwac@vfw.org).

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