



NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS.

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Rough Week for Marines

Our thoughts and prayers go out to the entire Marine Corps family this week. On Tuesday, an accidental mortar explosion killed seven and injured eight during a training exercise in Hawthorne, Nev., and three died yesterday in what is being investigated as a double homicide-suicide at MCB Quantico. VFW Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief John Stroud, who hails from Hawthorne, and local VFW Post 2313 led a memorial service Tuesday to honor the fallen and to pray for the injured and their families. More than 300 residents attended the service, and almost \$3,500 has been raised so far for the families. In a letter to Stroud, MCB Twentynine Palms Public Affairs Officer Capt. Nick Mannweiler wrote: *"My granddad served on Iwo Jima, Saipan, and Roi Namur and joined the VFW in 1946. The two greatest institutional loyalties he displayed every day of his life were to the U.S. Marine Corps and to the VFW."* Semper Fidelis, captain, and to the Corps.

Military Tuition Assistance Passes Congress

Both the House and Senate heard the calls of over **14,000 VFW advocates** when they voted to pass an amendment that will reinstate the Military Tuition Assistance program. The amendment was a part of a larger package (H.R. 933) that will fund the government until Sept. 30, 2013. The VFW's grassroots advocacy made the difference in getting the provision passed. [Learn more](#) about how the VFW's national network of advocates made Congress listen. To join our advocacy team, [sign up](#) with your address and email.

CBS Reality Show Angers the VFW

On Sunday, the CBS reality show *"Amazing Race"* aired footage of contestants using a downed B-52 memorial in Hanoi as a prop, and of young Vietnamese singing praises of their communist system. The task was for contestants to learn the lyrics. In a letter to CBS President and CEO Leslie Moonves, VFW National Commander John Hamilton wrote of the anger his organization is directing at CBS for failing to exercise programming oversight about a time in American history that continues to be misunderstood, misrepresented and stereotyped. Hamilton said the show

wasted a golden opportunity to educate as well as entertain. “The scene with the B-52 wreckage could have been used to tell a story about what was then America’s longest war, about the 58,195 American names on the Vietnam Wall, about the 1,652 Americans still listed as missing-in-action, or about the fates of the multiple crewmen aboard each of the 17 American B-52s we lost in combat,” he wrote, adding that the B-52 scene, as well as the young people singing a propaganda song, was totally unnecessary to the show’s plot, “which speaks volumes about naïve producers who think they’re in charge when they are not.” [Read more.](#)

The VFW Meets New SECDEF

The VFW Washington Office Executive Director Bob Wallace concluded a two-day conference at the Pentagon today with new Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, plus other DOD senior executives and leadership from more than two-dozen veteran and military service organizations and support groups. The purpose was to update the VSO/MSO communities on DOD programs and policies that affect service members, veterans and their families, and to listen to our concerns regarding budget impacts on military healthcare and Quality of Life programs, as well as access to senior Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps leadership. Hagel, a life member of Nebraska VFW Post 3704, has been in the position barely three weeks, but has already mended fences abroad, discussed better care for the troops with VA Secretary Shinseki, been forced into serious budget reductions due to sequestration, and has now sat down with the VSO/MSO communities. As Wallace said, “Secretary Hagel is one of us, and we look forward to a great partnership as we move ahead to properly care for the troops we send to war and their families who serve at home.”

CR Funding Passes Congress

Congress passed a Continuing Resolution (CR) that funds the federal government for FY 2013 (September 30, 2013). While most departments received funding levels equal to the FY 2012 levels, both DOD and VA were looked at more closely. Congress authorized DOD to transfer about \$10 billion to its Operations and Maintenance account to allow more flexibility in managing sequestration cuts. VA was funded at the Administration’s recommended levels for FY 2013, which included \$2 billion in Advance Appropriations increases for medical care accounts.

Protect Your COLA Today

This week, the Senate began budget talks. Amidst the debate over cuts and savings is a provision that would harm future COLA calculations. The proposal, known as chained CPI, would reduce benefits of all current and future veterans, retirees and their survivors. Senator Bernie Sander (I-VT), Chairman of the Veterans’ Affairs Committee, has introduced legislation to protect the current system of calculating COLA. We ask all of our advocates to contact their Senators today and urge them to support the Sanders’ amendment. [Click here](#) for details and to [take action](#).

Senate VA Committee Discuss Mental Health

On Wednesday, the Senate Veterans’ Affairs discussed mental healthcare and suicide programs within VA. The hearing is a follow-up to three mental health hearings held last Congress, which addressed gaps in care many veterans experience when seeking mental health treatment at VA. A VA Inspector General report requested by the Committee found VA scheduling did not follow directives and protocols and often was based on availability and not the clinical needs of patients. Committee Chairman Bernie Sanders (I-VT) and Ranking Member Richard Burr (R-NC) both believe that VA needs to look outside the box to fix what has become a broken process, and it cannot be soon enough as the number of veterans of all eras seek care and services within VA. To learn more about the hearing and to view an archived webcast, [click here](#).

House Hosts Hearing on Veterans Small Business

This week, the House Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations and the House Small Business Subcommittee on Contracting and Workforce hosted a joint hearing to

discuss the challenges service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses (SDVOSBs) face in doing business with the federal government. Panelists representing SDVOSBs discussed the uncertainty SDVOSBs face when seeking to secure contracts from VA because of inconsistencies in how VA's Center for Veterans Enterprise evaluates businesses for eligibility. The VFW, which has criticized CVE for its inconsistent and overly-stringent criteria, was on hand for the hearing. To learn more about the hearing and to read prepared remarks from each witness, [click here](#).

House VA Committee Hearing

This week, on the heels of last week's Senate VA Committee hearing on VBA's transformation process, the House Veterans' Affairs Committee held a hearing on the same topic—disability claims processing. Committee members asked General Allison Hickey, VA Under Secretary for Benefits, to review progress on employee training, workload and accountability within the current VBA transformation process. Hickey, the only witness at the hearing, openly discussed the electronic medical record, workload and the current composition of inventory within the backlog of claims. For more on the hearing and to view the recorded webcast, visit the House VA [website](#).

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

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