



NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS.

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Stolen Valor Act Headed to President

The VFW is applauding Congress this week for passing the *Stolen Valor Act of 2013*, introduced by Rep. Joe Heck and Sen. Dean Heller, both from Nevada. H.R. 258 was passed overwhelmingly in the House on Monday by a vote of 390-3, and the Senate passed its companion, S. 210, Wednesday night by unanimous consent. The legislation now heads to the White House for the president's signature. VFW National Commander John Hamilton said Congress followed the roadmap laid out by the U.S. Supreme Court when they overturned the original Stolen Valor Act last year. In their writings, the high court suggested any future legislation had to be narrower in focus than just to penalize people for simple lying, which they ruled as protected speech in a 6-3 decision. "Now the new language is bullet-proof," said Hamilton, "because the focus is on the intent to profit from the lie, to obtain money, property or something of a tangible benefit, which is what con artists have been doing throughout history." Not every combat award is covered, but the ones most worn by wannabe heroes will be protected once the bill becomes law. VFW advocates were able to reach all 100 Senate offices in record time after the House passed their bill, encouraging the Senate to take action. It is because of you that the Senate bill passed so quickly! [Read](#) about the VFW's reaction. To send a thank you to your Senators, [click here](#).

Obama Vows to Close Guantanamo

Yesterday, the president vowed again to close the U.S. detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and tasked the Defense Department to locate a site in the U.S. where military tribunals can be held. The VFW is firmly against both proposals by national resolutions approved by delegates attending our past three national conventions. Guantanamo serves a purpose: it keeps our most dangerous enemies off the battlefield, out of America, and provides an extremely secure and controlled environment for the military court system.

House VA Committee Evaluates Claims Initiative

The House VA Committee held a hearing to evaluate VA's recent initiative to process claims pending over two years. The VFW provided written testimony acknowledging that, although the

project did provide decisions to many who have waited a long time, more needs to be done to ensure VA creates a viable, effective and efficient system to develop and manage claims. VA Under Secretary for Benefits Allison Hickey spoke about the 34,834 claims that have been adjudicated within the last 30 days and how VBA will finalize the remaining 32,000 by the end of June. Committee members voiced concerns about current backlog numbers, employee training and performance reviews, and how VA plans to justify to veterans lengthy wait times for decisions. To learn more about the hearing and to view an archived webcast, [click here](#). To read the VFW's testimony in its entirety, [click here](#).

House VA Subcommittee Discusses Health Care Bills

The House VA Subcommittee on Health hosted a hearing to discuss pending veterans' healthcare legislation. The VFW provided written testimony offering comments on bills regarding VA travel benefits, CHAMPVA regulations and medical research. Among the bills we supported is H.R. 984, legislation that would establish an interagency task force on genitourinary organ trauma, or urotrauma—the technical terms for the loss or damage to reproductive organs. A recent study shows that 5 to 10 percent of battlefield injuries involve urotrauma, and that these injuries have been on the rise in Afghanistan. For more on the hearing and to read our complete testimony, [visit our blog](#).

VFW Joins Discussion on Military Credentialing

This week, the VFW joined Virginia Sen. Tim Kaine and Illinois Rep. Tammy Duckworth for a discussion on professional credentialing for military training. Kaine and Duckworth are the sponsors of the VFW-supported *Troop Talent Act of 2013*, a bipartisan bill that would improve the path to civilian professional credentials for service members trained by the military, ensure credentials are relevant to civilian industries, and increase access to high-demand industries for service members. [Learn more](#) about the discussion.

HASC Subcommittee Clears Personnel Bill

This week, the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Military Personnel cleared its section of the FY 2014 Defense Authorization bill (H.R. 1960) by voice vote. Among the provisions is stricter language to combat military sexual assault, which would bar commanders from dismissing all but minor sexual offenses from a court martial, and prohibit them from reducing a guilty finding in a sexual assault case to a lesser offense. The language comes on the heels of recent reports from the Pentagon estimating that 70 sexual assaults take place every day in the military. Other provisions included a 1.8 percent pay raise for service members and strong rejections to any Tricare Fee increases. The full committee is expected to take up the bill sometime after the Memorial Day recess. Check back here for full coverage of the NDAA as it moves through Congress. For the VFW's statement on military sexual assaults, [click here](#). To read the bill provisions, visit the committee [website](#).

VFW in Israel for Fact-Finding Mission

This week, VFW Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Bill Thien is in Israel to share ideas with our allies on military personnel readiness and veterans' issues like training, benefits, resiliency and access to mental healthcare. The VFW will also learn about the geopolitical issues facing Israelis and Palestinians in the volatile region. VFW National Legislative Director Ray Kelley accompanied Thien on the trip to provide updates. [Click here](#) for more information.

WWII Soldier Recovered

The Defense POW/MIA Office announced the identification of remains belonging to Army Pvt. William Yawney, 23, of Freemansburg, Pa.. On June 15, 1944, U.S. forces were ordered into Saipan as part of an Allied strategic goal to secure the Mariana Islands. After a month of intense fighting, enemy forces conducted a final attack on the 105th Infantry Regiment, 27th Infantry Division's position. Elements of the regiment sustained heavy losses, to include Yawney, who was

originally thought to have been buried in a military cemetery on Saipan. [Read more.](#)

Memorial Day 2013

National Commander John Hamilton will be representing the VFW in the White House Monday morning, as well as participating in Memorial Day ceremonies at Arlington National Cemetery and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Locally, many of our 7,200 VFW Posts will be having similar ceremonies to honor our fallen. As we gather to remember the more than 1 million Americans who served and died in our nation's conflicts going back to the Revolutionary War, please remember to keep our 83,000 missing and unaccounted-for servicemen—and their families—in your thoughts, as well as the men and women assigned to the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, who are tasked with bringing them home from some of the most austere places on Earth. As of today, there are 73,661 missing from World War II; 7,918 from the Korean War; 1,647 from the Vietnam War; 126 from the Cold War; and 6 from our wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. More information, plus loss statistics, are available at the [DPMO 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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