



VFW, SVA Launch New Initiative to Help Student-Veterans

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WASHINGTON (May 1, 2013) – The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. is now offering a new program called "1 Student Veteran" to provide direct assistance to student-veterans who are experiencing problems accessing their GI Bill or other earned benefits provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

"This partnership with the VFW will ensure student-veterans are provided with the necessary support needed to gain access to their earned benefits and navigate the complex education claims process," said Michael Dakduk, executive director of Student Veterans of America (SVA). "I am very proud of our continued partnership with the VFW, an organization dedicated to the success of student-veterans."

Any student-veteran who is experiencing difficulty in accessing their GI Bill or other VA benefits, or believes they have been wrongfully denied these benefits, can now e-mail the VFW at 1studentveteran@vfw.org. VFW National Veterans Service staff will acknowledge receipt of each inquiry within 24 hours during the workweek, then either intervene with the VA on behalf of the student-veteran or recommend other courses of action.

Through "1 Student Veteran," VFW and SVA will have direct access to the VA Regional Offices responsible for education claims adjudication, meaning veterans whose benefits have been denied or paid in error will not have to wait the months it would traditionally take to file a formal appeal. The new program is possible thanks to an ongoing collaboration among VFW, SVA and the VA's Veterans Benefits Administration, which approves and administers the GI Bill, as well as claims for other VA programs and services. "1 Student Veteran" is also the latest collaboration between VFW and SVA resulting from a memorandum of understanding signed by the two organizations in January.

"Our goal is to mitigate errors and resolve conflicts on the lowest possible level to ensure VA can deliver timely, accurate GI Bill benefits," said VFW National Veterans Service Assistant Director Jim Wear, who will manage "1 Student Veteran."

"The VFW has a proud history of working with veterans to make sure they can access their earned benefits, so '1 Student Veteran' is a great way for VFW to meet the needs of our

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newest generation of heroes," said VFW National Commander John Hamilton. "Student-veterans will now have a place to turn to for reliable and timely help when they encounter problems with the VA."

Last year, VFW's nationwide cadre of 1,200 VA-accredited service officers helped more than 125,000 veterans to recoup \$3.7 billion in earned compensation and pension from the VA at no cost to the veteran.