

VFW Commander Discusses Veterans' Issues with President

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WASHINGTON — The national commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. met with President George W. Bush in the Oval Office this morning to discuss issues important to America's veterans, service members and their families.

George Lisicki thanked the president for his strong support of the troops and their families, and for personally hosting the VFW's Voice of Democracy winners during his tenure, but the Vietnam veteran from Carteret, N.J., also used the opportunity to voice the VFW's strong support of the new GI Bill for the 21st century that has been proposed by Sen. Jim Webb (D-Va.).

"Creating a new GI Bill has been a long-standing national goal for the VFW," said Lisicki, who discounts criticism by some in the administration who say an enhanced education package would result in a mass exodus of first-term enlistees.

"People are leaving after their first enlistment because they are tired of being shot at, and their families are tired of the frequent deployments," he said. "Whether they stay in four years or 20, we owe this newest Greatest Generation the gift of education, and that's why the VFW is solidly behind Webb's bill."

The VFW national commander also addressed military quality of life issues, and concern for the proper care of returning wounded to the nation's military and Veterans Affairs medical facilities, as well as compensation and disability benefits.

"Proper and fully funded veterans' healthcare is a top priority for the VFW," Lisicki said. "We appreciate the tremendous VA budget increases because it will help them meet the needs of a growing veterans' population that now includes thousands of wounded troops from Iraq and Afghanistan."

The president shared Lisicki's concern for veterans and for the troops and their families. He was also very complimentary of the VFW and Ladies Auxiliary for the many programs they conduct throughout the country to assist veterans and military families.

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“It was good visit, and I am grateful to President Bush for the opportunity,” said Lisicki, who added that he’s hopeful that the VFW’s call for a new GI Bill, and concerns about the VA claims backlog ,will be fully considered.

"The president and I fully agree that taking care of our troops and their families during a time of war is a national priority. I look forward to working with him and his administration to ensure our goals become reality."