

VFW Calls Simpson Comment Irresponsible

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WASHINGTON —The nation's largest organization of combat veterans is taking strong issue with a comment made by the Republican co-chairman of a presidential commission on fiscal responsibility and reform, who suggested that benefits provided to disabled military veterans are partly responsible for the nation's financial crisis.

On Tuesday, former three-term U.S. Sen. Alan Simpson of Wyoming said "The irony [is] that the veterans who saved this country are now, in a way, not helping us to save the country in this fiscal mess."

"The only polite way to respond is to call his comment totally irresponsible and potentially detrimental to the great programs and services our nation now provides to her disabled veterans," said Richard L. Eubank, the new national commander of the 2.1 million-member Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. and its Auxiliaries.

"The VFW's founding fathers returned home from the Spanish American War and Philippine Insurrection to a government that bore little responsibility to care for their wounds or their rehabilitation," explained Eubank, a retired Marine and Vietnam veteran from Eugene, Ore. "Since 1899, the VFW along with our sister organizations who followed later have been petitioning our government to properly care for those who not only saved our country, but who allowed all others to flourish and build their tomorrows unburdened by the patriotic responsibilities of national defense and personal sacrifice," he said.

"Regardless of his reasoning, Mr. Simpson is totally out-of-line to lay any part of the nation's economic woes on disabled veterans," said Eubank. "The VFW believes in fiscal responsibility, but veterans' programs are sacrosanct, and the day our government cannot afford to take care of veterans is the day our government should quit creating them."

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