

What Does Super Committee Failure Mean to VFW?

Questions remain about co-payments and VA category 7 and 8

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The congressional Super Committee has thrown in the towel and admitted they cannot reach a bipartisan agreement to cut a minimum of \$1.2 trillion from the federal budget over the next decade. Under the law passed this summer, mandatory cuts will now take place across all federal departments and agencies beginning January 2013.

Where and how much, however, is still to be determined.

Each cabinet secretary will decide where the cuts will be made after the White House Office of Management and Budget identifies which, if any, programs are exempt. Social Security, Medicaid and Medicare have been mentioned as being exempt, as have veterans programs, but no one has yet identified which veterans programs.

The VFW believes that veterans' healthcare programs and benefits will be exempt from any cuts. Questions remain, however, about increased co-payments for visits and prescriptions, as well as charging VA category 7 and 8 veterans an annual enrollment fee. We will continue to monitor and report any new developments as they occur.

Over at the Defense Department are recommendations to change the pay and benefits of those currently serving and military retirees. The threats include changing the military retirement system for future enlistees, limiting retiree healthcare program enrollment, and imposing or increasing healthcare fees on all TRICARE programs, regardless of age. These proposals are in addition to possible reductions in force and cuts to other quality of life programs. The budget crisis has also forced defense hawks to choose between supporting

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people programs and new weapon systems development. Sadly, some have forgotten that it still takes people to occupy territory and to operate their shiny new aircraft, ships and tanks.

Our nation hollowed out its force after Vietnam and again after the first Gulf War. If the past 10 years have proven anything, it is that the All Volunteer Force works, but it comes with a price and a promise to maintain the quality of life programs for those few who serve. Since 9/11, many of the less than 1 percent of the population who volunteered to serve their nation have been deployed into the fight numerous times. The service-connected disabilities thousands have already received will require a strong and viable military healthcare system to return them to duty, and a strong and viable VA healthcare system to meet their lifetime care needs.

Traumatic Brain Injury, Post-Traumatic Stress, amputations, and the risk of suicide are predominate issues of a military force at war. The preservation of military and veteran benefits, improved quality and accessible healthcare, and continued medical research into alternative treatments is how our nation can properly repay those who go into harm's way.

Over the next year, many in Congress as well as thousands of registered lobbyists will be working hard to protect their special interests and programs. We must all work hard to protect the Department of Veterans Affairs health, benefits and cemetery administrations, as well as all military quality of life programs for the troops, their families and military retirees.

I ask each of you to contact your respective members of the House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate to demand that these programs be protected. State Commanders and members of the National Legislative Committee must arrange individual face-to-face meetings with every member of their Congressional Delegation to alert them to our concerns. These meetings should be in addition to your visits to your Congressional delegations during the March 2012 Legislative Conference. I also ask that you report the responses you receive back to the VFW Action Corps at vfwac@vfw.org.

These meetings will be in addition to a massive outreach campaign to the entire U.S. Congress that I ask National Legislative Committee members to spearhead in each state and department. We need Congress to be flooded with letters and phone calls to protect veterans' programs and military quality of life programs from any cuts. This is an obligation of every member of the VFW and their families to keep the faith with our comrades who

need us to be their collective voice in Washington. Please refer to the [VFW website](#) for constant updates and the "10 for 10" issues we have raised, along with sample letters for your use.

The VFW needs you to make your voice heard now, because the most powerful message Congress can receive is from the folks who employ them — their voting constituents.

Thank you for your continued support of America's heroes.

ROBERT E. WALLACE
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