

10 for 10: VFW Won't Stand for Broken Promises

Update: VFW mobilizes to protect military benefits as Congress looks to slash spending

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Recently, when Congress voted to raise the nation's debt ceiling, they specifically [targeted national security spending](#) to absorb many of the cuts, indicating that Department of Defense personnel programs and VA benefits would not be spared.

Leaders in Congress have already discussed cutting or eliminating 10 benefits affecting military members, veterans and their families in recent months, and the VFW believes that these toxic proposals will once again gain momentum as Congress looks for ways to tighten its belt. An in-depth explanation of each proposed cut is included below.

America's all-volunteer military has shouldered a multi-theater war all by themselves for almost 10 years. They did so without question, and often with tremendous sacrifice to themselves and their families.

Americans understand the scope of the national debt crisis; a crisis that could have serious repercussions on a military at war and a veterans' population that has already sacrificed much for the nation. However, instead of debating and enacting meaningful fiscal reforms, some in Congress have proposed plans that would leave America's military and her veterans to shoulder more of the national debt.

This "10 for 10" plan — to cut 10 specific benefits to pay for 10 years of war — is a breach of faith with America's military and veteran families, and the national commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. and its Auxiliaries is calling upon his 2 million members to fight it.

"Our military and veterans have earned each of the 10 benefits Congress is proposing to cut," said VFW National Commander Richard L. Eubank, a retired Marine and Vietnam combat veteran from Eugene, Ore.

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“Our nation broke a similar promise to her World War I veterans,” he said. “It took the VFW to lead thousands of them in a march on Washington until Congress made the responsible choice to support them. The VFW wouldn’t stand for broken promises then and we won’t stand for it now.”

The 10 ways Congress is targeting military and veterans’ benefits during today’s difficult fiscal times are to:

- [Increase healthcare premiums for military retirees on TRICARE](#)
- [Increase pharmaceutical fees for troops, families and retirees](#)
- [Eliminate presumptive service-connected conditions for disabled and ill veterans](#)
- [Lock out or increase fees for Department of Veterans Affairs Priority Groups 7 and 8 veterans](#)
- [Reduce cost-of-living allowances](#)
- [Freeze military pay](#)
- [End government subsidies to military commissaries](#)
- [Eliminate Department of Defense elementary schools stateside](#)
- [Eliminate the 20-year military retirement plan](#)
- [Eliminate DOD tuition reimbursement programs for service members](#)

While Congress publicly debated raising the nation’s debt ceiling, the VFW was concerned that many of the proposed cuts were being discussed behind closed doors. The VFW has the same concerns over the new bipartisan “Gang of 12” Super Congress tasked to develop the nation’s debt reduction plan. Eubank said the VFW recognizes that the nation must make difficult fiscal decisions, but the programs and benefits provided to veterans and military families were prepaid in full through their honorable service and sacrifice.

“Unlike other government-funded entitlement programs, veterans earned their benefits by making a national commitment that 99 percent of other Americans are simply unwilling to make,” said Eubank. “To ask these same men and women to sacrifice more is simply unconscionable.”

The VFW also believes that cutting the 10 benefits could have tremendous impact on military recruiting and readiness, and threaten the future viability of the all-volunteer force. Healthcare, education, a retirement system and family programs are critical factors in retaining talented personnel in a low-paying and extremely dangerous profession.

Eubank said as the debate over fiscal responsibility continues to unfold in Washington, the VFW will work to ensure that military and veterans’ benefits remain intact.

In the coming weeks, the VFW will continue to put pressure on Congress to ensure proposed fiscal reforms do not negatively affect troops, veterans or their families.

Join the effort and make your voice heard by calling, writing, or e-mailing your members of Congress. To learn how, visit VFW's Capwiz page at <http://capwiz.com/vfw/dbq/officials/>, and to follow the story as it develops, visit the VFW's new Capitol Hill blog at www.vfwonthehill.org.