



# McKeon Receives VFW Congressional Award

## Protecting VA budget and defeating DOD anti-people initiatives tops legislative agenda

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**WASHINGTON** — The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. awarded House Armed Services Committee Chairman Howard P. “Buck” McKeon (R-Calif.) with the 2012 VFW Congressional Award Tuesday afternoon for his outstanding service to the nation’s military and to a strong and secure America.

“The chairman fights to strengthen our military and to invest in a force that can meet and beat any threat,” said VFW National Commander Richard L. DeNoyer. “He also led efforts to keep terrorist detainees off of U.S. soil, increased missile defense funding, restored the tradition of keeping nondefense social issues out of the defense bill, and is a leading voice to keep the military intact in this budget-cutting era. Our military and veterans’ communities of past and present have no better friend in Congress than Chairman McKeon.”

The Tuesday afternoon award presentation was part of the VFW’s annual legislative conference where almost 300 VFW members visiting their elected officials discuss issues important to veterans, service members and their families. Topmost this year is to protect the Department of Veterans Affairs budget from mandatory cuts if sequestration occurs, and to defeat the Defense Department’s negative quality of life proposals that would restrict military pay, substantially increase Tricare costs on military dependents and retirees, and overhaul a military retirement system into something more suitable for civilian companies.

“There is no military personnel issue more sacrosanct than pay and benefits,” said DeNoyer, a retired Marine and Vietnam combat veteran from Middleton, Mass.

“A secure America needs a strong military, which is one of many reasons why Chairman McKeon was selected for this year’s award,” he said. “Messing with military pay and benefits is a clear signal to the troops and their families that the budget is more important than people. That money-first mindset is going to seriously hurt recruiting and retention, and

### NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

406 W. 34th Street  
Kansas City, MO 64111  
Office 816.756.3390  
Fax 816.968.1157

### WASHINGTON OFFICE

200 Maryland Ave., N.E.  
Washington, D.C. 20002  
Office 202.543.2239  
Fax 202.543.6719

info@vfw.org  
www.vfw.org

potentially end the all-volunteer force.”

These and other important issues will be addressed in detail tomorrow when the VFW national commander testifies before a joint hearing of the Senate and House Veterans Affairs Committees. Other high-interest topics range from military transition and employment assistance programs to education, the proper care and treatment of wounded warriors, women veterans, the 1.7 million VA claims workload, and combating veteran suicides and homelessness, among others.

Other events at the VFW Legislative Conference:

Wounded Warrior Dinner at the National Press Club for about 75 wounded troops and their families from the Walter Reed National Medical Center at nearby Bethesda, Md.

A \$30,000 scholarship was awarded Sunday evening to the winner of the annual VFW Voice of Democracy program, a patriotic-themed contest that this year judged 50,000 high school student entries. The winner was joined onstage by 8th grader Lydia Macfarlan from Siloam Springs, Ark., who beat almost 125,000 other middle school students to win a \$10,000 U.S. Savings Bond in the VFW’s annual Patriot’s Pen contest.

The VFW Gold Medal and Citation to the Marine Corps Wounded Warrior Regiment for the tremendous work and assistance they provide to wounded, ill and injured Marines and assigned sailors. Accepting tonight will be the regiment’s commanding officer, Col. John Mayer.

The VFW will stream delayed video Wednesday afternoon of the VFW national commander’s congressional testimony. View the testimony and past events all on the VFW homepage at [www.vfw.org](http://www.vfw.org).