

VFW in Washington to Discuss Critical Issues

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WASHINGTON — The top leadership of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. is in Washington for the VFW's Fall Legislative Conference and to meet with key officials in the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Defense.

"It is critical for the VFW to give our veteran and military communities a voice on Capitol Hill, especially with the end of the federal government's fiscal year two weeks away and still no end to the continuing damage sequestration is doing inside the Defense Department," said VFW National Commander William A. Thien, a Vietnam veteran from Georgetown, Ind. "That's why it's so important for the VFW National Legislative Committee to gather here twice a year to petition Congress on issues that are vitally important to all veterans, service members and their families."

Leading a list of five critical issues to be presented is the budget sequestration, followed by military sexual assault protections, in-state tuition for all GI Bill recipients, grandfathering the Tricare Prime benefit for all current military retirees, and the passage of advanced appropriations for all VA programs. Thien is also scheduled to meet with the VA secretary as well as senior DOD officials. VFW Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief John Stroud from Nevada and Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief John Biedrzycki from Pennsylvania are scheduled to meet with wounded troops and their providers at Fort Belvoir, as the 70 legislative committee members stress the five critical issues inside the offices of all 535 members of Congress.

"The failure of Congress to pass a budget is having a perilous impact on a Defense Department that, despite appearances, is very worried about its ability to respond to a new contingency tasking elsewhere in our troubled world," said Thien.

"The lack of a FY 2014 defense budget and the continuing sequestration is causing concerns our fighting force and their families do not need or deserve, not while they continue to shoulder 100 percent of a 12-year of war that has not yet ended. Congress must pass a budget for the Department of Defense and do so now."

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