

VFW National Commander Testifies Before Congress

‘Our nation is still at war’

Mar 05, 2014

[Watch the full testimony here.](#)

During today’s testimony before a joint hearing of the Senate and House Veterans Affairs Committees, the national commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. (VFW) expressed the organization’s deep concern over America’s disregard for veterans.

“What concerns the VFW and patriots everywhere is that America has forgotten that OUR NATION IS STILL AT WAR,” explained William A. Thien, commander-in-chief of the VFW. “We have 38,000 men and women stationed inside Afghanistan fighting to ensure the country doesn’t become a terrorist training ground again. We have another 30,000 stationed in South Korea helping to preserve a 61-year-old ceasefire that is looking more and more tenuous. We have tens of thousands more service members stationed abroad helping to bring peace and stability, and humanitarian assistance when and where it’s needed.”

Thien went on to address the war now being waged on American soil as well, reminding lawmakers of the ongoing veterans’ fight to retain their promised benefits and Quality of Life programs. He noted the passage of the recent COLA penalty, an initiative that VFW was adamantly against since its introduction late last year. “Some believe the cost of war ends when the last troops leave Afghanistan. We know this is not true, and that is why we need a fully funded state-of-the-art VA health care system, benefits programs and cemetery system.”

He pledged that the more than 1.9 million members of the VFW and its Auxiliaries will fight to preserve the safety and security of America and the viability of its All-Volunteer Military. He also vowed to fight attempts to force veterans, service members and their families to shoulder an unfair share of the nation’s debt, and promised to continue the fight for adequate funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs, as well as for advance appropriations for its programs.

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Thien explained to Congress that the VFW's mission is to ensure that a nation that creates veterans fulfills its sacred duty to care for them when they return home. "The VFW exists to serve veterans, and that includes representing them in Washington where the voice of one veteran is often overlooked and the voice of servicemen and women is prohibited.

"Everything the VFW wants costs money, but everything the VFW wants is for someone else—someone from every city and town in every congressional district, and in every state and territory who swore an oath of allegiance to protect and defend our great country and its Constitution," Thien stated.

[Read the entire testimony.](#)

The testimony caps the 2014 Legislative Conference during which more than 500 VFW members and leaders convened in Washington to meet with their elected officials to discuss veterans issues and the VFW's expectations.

Other noteworthy events from the conference include:

Rep. Joe Wilson (S.C.) receiving the VFW Congressional Award in recognition of his outstanding service to our nation and for his support and dedication to service members, veterans and their families.

The VFW hosted dinner at the National Press Club for 60 Wounded Warriors and caregivers from Walter Reed National Military Medical Center along with their families.

The VFW named Madison Haley from Mount Pulaski, Ill., the first-place winner of the annual Voice of Democracy scholarship competition and winner of a \$30,000 scholarship. Madison's patriotic-themed essay received the highest marks out of 40,000 participating high school students.

Alexis Canen from Glendive, Mont., was named the first-place winner of VFW's Patriot's Pen competition, winning her a \$5,000 award.

Photo: VFW National Commander Bill Thien testifies before a joint hearing of the Senate and House Veterans Affairs Committees.