

Ending Sequestration Again Tops VFW Legislative Agenda

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WASHINGTON — Ending sequestration again tops the list of critical issues for the fall legislative conference of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S.

“In the six months of forced sequestration last year, all military training was virtually eliminated in order to support the war effort,” said VFW National Commander John W. Stroud, who arrives this weekend along with more than 70 members of the VFW Legislative Committee, who will be meeting with every member of Congress or their staffs next week. “The forced sequester meant planes didn’t fly, ships didn’t sail and ground troops didn’t train, all because Congress can’t reach a budget compromise,” he said. “We are a nation still at war in Afghanistan, with thousands of troops stationed in hot spots elsewhere, and now we’re fighting a new evil called the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. The absolute last thing our troops need to worry about is the budget uncertainty that Congress created and only Congress can end. The failure of Congress to end the sequester, or to pass an on-time defense 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 Stroud.

Regarding the Department of Veterans Affairs, the VFW will also deliver to Congress a new report on the state of VA health care, entitled “*Hurry Up and Wait*,” which analyzed the past four months of VFW outreach efforts — phone, email, town hall meetings, and personal surveys — that enabled more than 1,600 veterans in all 50 states to share their VA health care experiences. The report includes 11 specific recommendations to improve the state of VA care and restore veterans’ confidence in the system, as well as the VFW’s expectations for how VA must implement the new provisions included in the recently-passed *Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act*. Read the VFW report [here](#).

Another issue is to update the VFW’s congressional charter, which was signed in 1936 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt when the military was comprised almost entirely of men. The two wording changes — replacing men with veterans, and widows with surviving spouses — is supported by two companion bills, S. 2782 and H.R. 5441, which were introduced by Senate VA Committee Chairman Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) and House VA Committee Chairman Jeff Miller (R-Fla.), respectively.

“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 less than three weeks away and still no new defense bill or an end to sequestration,” said Stroud. “That’s why it’s

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

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.”