

Ending Sequestration Again Tops VFW Legislative Agenda

Veteran champion Bernie Sanders to receive VFW Congressional Award

Feb 27, 2015

WASHINGTON — More than 500 members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. are arriving in the Nation’s Capital this weekend to urge their members of Congress to end sequestration, which is set to restart Oct. 1.

“America is still a nation at war, and the looming restart of mandatory sequestration will have a devastating impact on the ability of our military to respond when and where necessary, on homeland security, and on military quality-of-life and veterans’ programs everywhere,” said VFW National Commander John W. Stroud. “Our members— all voting constituents—will use this face-to-face opportunity to demand that their Congress put an end to the sequester, to defeat continued attempts to force veterans, service members and their families to shoulder an unfair share of the nation’s debt, to approve advance appropriations for all VA accounts, and to fight to preserve the safety and security of the United States and the continued viability of the All-Volunteer Military.”

Stroud is scheduled to present the [VFW’s legislative positions](#) at 10 a.m., Wednesday, in testimony before a joint hearing of the Senate and House Veterans Affairs Committees in the Dirksen Senate Office Building. That evening he will also present Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) with the VFW’s 2015 Congressional Award, which since 1964 has been presented annually to one sitting member of the House or Senate for significant legislative contributions on behalf of those who have worn the uniform.

“With eight years on the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee — two of them as chairman — it is no understatement to say that Senator Sanders has taken care of wounded, ill and injured veterans and their surviving family members,” said Stroud. “He has been a commanding voice against changing the COLA calculations for disabled veterans, for the proper care and

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treatment of women veterans, homeless veterans, for better employment opportunities and improved access to mental health programs, as well as increased congressional oversight of the VA claims processing transformation,” he said.

“And when the VA imploded last year, he was the lead negotiator for the Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act, which the president signed into law last summer,” said the VFW national commander. “The VA still has an uphill climb to fix what’s broken, to hold employees appropriately accountable, and to restore the faith of veterans in their VA, but veterans everywhere should be proud and comforted to know that this United States senator has their back in Congress.”

Other legislative conference highlights include:

- Hosting a Wounded Warrior Dinner tonight for wounded troops and their families from the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center at nearby Bethesda, Md.
- An inaugural VFW-Student Veterans of America Legislative Fellowship Program. The 10 selected Fellows are currently enrolled in colleges or universities in Florida, Hawaii, Indiana, Nevada, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Texas, Virginia and Wisconsin. They will be paired with a VFW mentor and accompany their respective VFW state delegations around Capitol Hill for in-person meetings with their members of Congress and their staffs. The student veterans will also receive briefings from the VA Department of Labor on ongoing policy initiatives, as well as briefings on ways to work constructively with the media when advocating for veterans’ policy initiatives.
- Awarding a \$30,000 scholarship Monday evening at the Hyatt Regency Crystal City, Va., to the winner of the annual VFW Voice of Democracy program, a patriotic-themed contest that this year judged almost 37,200 high school student entries. The winner will be joined onstage by Ethan E. Schroeder, a 13-year-old 7th Grader from Mary Queen of Apostles Catholic School, Tarentum, Penn., who bested more than 125,000 other middle school students to win a \$5,000 scholarship in the VFW’s annual Patriot’s Pen contest.

The VFW will stream live video of the 2015 Voice of Democracy Parade of Winners beginning at 6 p.m. (EST), Monday, and video of the VFW national commander’s congressional testimony will begin streaming Wednesday at 2 p.m. (EST). Visit <http://www.vfw.org/legislativeconference/> to access the stream directly or use the “on-

demand” feature to watch at any time. Veterans and supporters can also follow the VFW on the web at www.vfw.org, as well as on social media. Look for #VFWHill2015 on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.