VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS.

VFW Files Suit Against VA

New claims procedure benefits the government, not veterans

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WASHINGTON — The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and Disabled American Veterans filed a joint lawsuit yesterday to force the Department of Veterans Affairs to change a new claims submission procedure that was created solely to benefit the VA, not veterans.

The main issue is the elimination of an informal claims process and the institution of a rigid, veteran-unfriendly system for filing claims for benefits, among several other disagreements, explained William L. Bradshaw, VFW director of National Veterans Service, who oversees a nationwide cadre of more than 1,500 VA-accredited service officers who assist veterans with filing their VA claims.

Previously, any form of written communication would have served notice on the VA that within one year, that veteran would be filing a formal claim for disability compensation. If approved, the claim's effective date could be backdated to the day of the initial notification. As of March 24, the VA now no longer accepts informal claims, and instead requires all veterans to use a standardized form, which essentially postpones the effective date and denies compensation to veterans.

"The VFW doesn't oppose the use of standardized forms," said Bradshaw. "Our opposition is to this all or nothing approach that VA is forcing on veterans — changes, that if left in place, will guarantee in this year alone that tens of thousands of service-connected wounded, ill and injured veterans will be denied benefits they were entitled to before the change became effective."

The VFW, DAV, and other veterans' service organizations fought against the change after VA first proposed it in October 2013.

"The VA is once again changing the rules to make the claims process easier for them, not for

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the veterans the VA was created to serve," said Bradshaw, who added that the new change makes it even more difficult on veterans who don't understand the process, and especially on those who do not avail themselves of the expert and free claims assistance provided by the VFW and other nationally-recognized and VA-accredited service officers.

"The VA's move to a standardized form should not come at the cost of an informal claims notification procedure that works," he said. "The VA can and should accept both."

Read the lawsuit here.

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ABOUT THE VFW: The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. is a nonprofit veterans service organization comprised of eligible veterans and military service members from the active, Guard and Reserve forces. Founded in 1899 and chartered by Congress in 1936, the VFW is the nation's largest organization of war veterans and its oldest major veterans organization. With nearly 1.9 million VFW and Auxiliary members located in more than 6,800 Posts worldwide, *"NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS."* The VFW and its Auxiliaries are dedicated to veterans' service, legislative advocacy, and military and community service programs. For more information or to join, visit our website at www.vfw.org.

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