

VA Appeals Reform Now Law

VFW proud of united Congress and White House

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WASHINGTON — The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States is saluting President Trump for signing into law today the VFW-supported Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017.

“Today’s signing is the culmination of more than a year’s work by the VFW and other partner organizations with Congress and the VA to build consensus on how to better help veterans access their benefits,” said VFW National Commander Keith Harman. “Under the old system, appeals could take up to five years or longer to adjudicate, and veterans had no way out. Maintaining the status quo was unacceptable, so the VFW and our partners acted with a unified voice,” he said.

“As a former veterans’ service officer myself, I know first-hand that many of the veterans the VFW helps every day to access their earned benefits will be better served under this new framework,” said Harman. “We look forward to working with the Department of Veterans Affairs to make sure this new framework results in timely, understandable and accurate benefits decisions for veterans.”

The new law provides three options for veterans to appeal disability rating decisions made by the Veterans Benefits Administration. It also allows some veterans already in the appeals process to opt in to the new system. Under the new process, the three options available to veterans dissatisfied with their initial claims rating decisions are to seek a higher-level review by a regional office on the same evidence presented to the original claims processors; to file a supplemental claim with a regional office that would include the opportunity to submit additional evidence; or to opt for an expedited consideration of their appeal directly to the Board of Veterans’ Appeals. The entire intent of the new law is to speed the appeals process, which the VFW wholeheartedly supports.

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Harman noted that today's signing was the third major veterans bill signed within the past two weeks. The other two were the VA Choice and Quality Employment Act of 2017, which provides six additional months of funding for the VA Choice Program, as well improves hiring VA authorities and authorizes the department to enter into 28 new leases for medical clinics and research; and the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Education Assistance Act of 2017, a beefed-up Post-9/11 GI Bill that protects the educational benefits veterans, service members and their families earned, expands access and eligibility, and removes the 15-year, use-or-lose restriction.

"Ending sequestration and fixing the VA are the VFW's top two legislative initiatives," said the VFW national commander. "The passage of all three bills are great leaps toward fixing the VA and restoring the faith of veterans in their VA — all thanks to a united Congress and a new president who vowed during the campaign trail that he would take care of veterans, service members and their families, and who has so far been true in both word and deed."

Read the [Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017 here](#).