

# Recovering Money for Veterans ‘Means a Lot’

**For six years, Reginald Sims has helped veterans in his county file VA claims and the VFW member says assisting them and their families is his life’s ‘passion’**

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For Reginald Sims, becoming a veterans service officer was not something he planned. But once he got started, it became his passion.

Sims has been the accredited VFW service officer at the Madison County Veterans Services in Jackson, Tenn., for six years. He served in the 1991 Persian Gulf War with the 10th Special Forces Group as a canon crewmember; in Iraq and Afghanistan from June 2005 to October 2006 with the 278th Field Artillery Battalion as a canon crewmember; and in Kuwait from January 2011 to February 2012 with the 278th as an automated logistical specialist.

Sims, a life member of VFW Post 6496 in Jackson, Tenn., became a service officer after a VA assistant commissioner in Tennessee, whom he knew from his time in the service, suggested that he would be a good fit in that role. As Sims was retiring from the military, he chose to give back to his community and “help fellow veterans” and their families.

“I ended up loving it,” Sims said. “It became a big, strong passion.”

The most rewarding part of the job, he explained, is when a veteran receives his or her compensation, regardless of the amount. “Even if it’s only 10 percent, it means a lot to someone just living off of social security or just barely getting by,” Sims said.

In one case in 2013, Sims assisted a widow whose husband was a World War II veteran and had been a prisoner of war. She had not been receiving compensation, and Sims helped her through the process of receiving what she was eligible for.

## 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

Now, every time the woman sees Sims in the community, he said, she makes a point to talk to him.

One of the most common cases Sims assists with is “50/50 compensation,” in addition to pension cases for widows.

“I do about 50 percent compensation, which requires me to look at the veteran’s military service medical records and apply all issues for the veteran for compensation benefits,” Sims said.

Sims and one other staffer handle at least 500 cases annually.

For anyone looking to become a service officer, Sims said they should make sure it’s something they “really want to do” and that they have a thick skin.

“It’s going to be challenging,” Sims said. “Several times vets come in and blame you for them not getting compensated, not knowing [that we only assist with filing claims, not granting compensation].”

By and large, the most challenging part of the job, Sims said, is getting the veteran into his office to begin with.

“It’s convincing veterans to come in because for so long they’ve had negative views of VA as far as service officers helping them,” Sims said. The NVS staff in VFW’s Washington Office is “willing to assist” with any questions he might have, according to Sims, and the accreditation classes NVS holds for its service officers are beneficial. “[At the classes], I’m always learning something new that I can apply to a veteran’s case here, and it just helps me a lot,” Sims said. “We can always refer to [what we learned] because we get to keep all the materials.”

*Editor’s note: This is the first in a series of feature articles on VFW’s accredited veterans service officers. In 2019, VFW is commemorating 100 years of veterans advocacy by its National Veterans Service and National Legislative Service offices in Washington, D.C.*

*This article is featured in the 2019 February issue of [VFW magazine](#), and was written by [Kari Williams](#), associate editor for VFW magazine.*