VFW Calls New York Times Article Off-Base

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WASHINGTON — The national commander of America's largest and oldest major war veterans' organization is calling an article published yesterday in the New York Times off-base and biased against pre-9/11 veterans' service organizations.

"The article, entitled 'Veterans Groups Compete With Each Other, and Struggle With the V.A.,' was biased, misinformed, and totally off-base as it tried to pit veterans' organizations against one another, and for implying that we are losing our voice within not only the Department of Veterans Affairs but within this administration," said B.J. Lawrence, national commander of the 1.6 million-member Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and its Auxiliary.

"I read the article expecting balance, but unfortunately it was very much against any pre-9/11 organization and very much pro any organization that was created afterwards," said Lawrence. "Every military quality of life program or VA benefit we have today is because of the strong advocacy of legacy organizations who've been there, done that, and who swore to make it better for following generations. The legacy organizations, the so-called Big Six, created and continue to create change because our size enables us to have the wherewithal to hire and groom subject matter experts, as well as retain them," he said. "Our size also means we have the bandwidth to lobby on a multitude of issues on behalf of all veterans, service members and their families. It's a track record of accomplishments after accomplishments that every member of Congress, every VA secretary, and every president knows.

"There is much to be said about how relevant an organization — the VFW for example — must be in order to thrive for 119 years through multiple generations of veterans who all returned home from their wars and conflicts saying 'no one understands me,'" said Lawrence. "A large number of VFW leadership positions are filled by post-9/11 veterans who understand what came before and who today are dedicated to ensuring this and ensuing generations of veterans are properly cared for by a VA that we helped to create almost 90 years ago," he said. "No one in the VA, the administration or the media should ever drive wedges into what we do collectively on behalf of those too few who have served our country in uniform. I expected much better from the New York Times."

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