VFW Testifies Before Congress

Mar 18, 2009

WASHINGTON — The national commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. has made it absolutely clear to Congress that his organization is adamantly opposed to an administration proposal to bill disabled veterans with private health insurance for the service-connected care they receive at Department of Veterans Affairs medical facilities.

"It is wrong to pass along the costs of war to wounded and disabled veterans," said Glen M. Gardner Jr., in testimony today before a joint hearing of the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees. The VFW national commander had also made his opposition known to the president during a White House meeting Monday, as well as to congressional leaders of both parties yesterday.

"The proposal would lead to disabled veterans subsidizing their own injuries through increased premiums and fees as insurance companies try to find ways to pass along the added expense," testified Gardner, a Vietnam veteran from Round Rock, Texas. "It could also make it harder for veterans to obtain and maintain private health care insurance, and it is entirely possible that this proposal could impair a veteran's ability to obtain a job."

A second issue Gardner stressed was the recent rash of negative reports about the Veterans Benefits Administration claims processing system.

"Consider the recent revelations of hundreds of documents in shredder bins, intentionally misdated claims files, and 16,000 pieces of unprocessed mail at just one regional office. Are these signs of a system veterans can trust?" he asked the committee members. "Veterans are losing faith in this unmanageable system."

The VFW national commander did laud the efforts of new VA Secretary Eric Shinseki to transform the VA electronically and culturally.

"The secretary recently said that 'People induce change, not technology or processes, so transformation is ultimately a leadership issue.' The VFW wholeheartedly agrees with him," said Gardner, "and is a willing partner in ensuring that the VA keeps to its sacred mission of caring for him – and now her – who has borne the battle."

Other issues addressed were the need for advanced funding of the VA, further traumatic

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

Online Version: https://www.vfw.org/media-and-events/latest-releases/archives/2009/3/vfw-testifies-before-congress

brain injury research and treatment, suicide awareness and prevention, women veterans' healthcare needs, seamless transition, new GI Bill implementation, vocational rehabilitation program enhancements, military Tricare, homeless veterans and survivor benefits, among others.

The full testimony can be read here.