

VA Aggressively Working Claims Backlog

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WASHINGTON — The national commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. said the most important takeaway from [last night's 60 Minutes piece on the Department of Veterans Affairs](#) was that the VA is aggressively working to overcome a claims backlog that is currently delaying benefits payments to hundreds of thousands of disabled military veterans.

"The backlog is something the VFW is very concerned about," said Thomas J. Tradewell Sr., a combat-wounded Vietnam veteran from Sussex, Wis.

"We understand the frustration that veterans and their families experience from delayed, rejected or improperly adjudicated claims, but we also know there are no quick fixes," he said. "That's why the VFW will continue to work with VA leadership and Congress to find a permanent solution, because we know the backlog will only continue to rise as the veterans' population ages, as more become eligible from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and elsewhere, as presumptive illnesses and programs are expanded, and as more veterans learn about the government programs and benefits available to them."

The VFW has for a number of years lobbied the Administration and Congress for additional funding and new oversight to address the claims problem. In response, the VA has added 4,200 new employees to compensation and pension claims processing over the past three years. They are working diligently to develop new information technology programs that will assist in the claims process system, and working jointly with the Defense Department to create an electronic medical and service record capability to ease a veteran's transition from DOD to VA care.

As VA continues to expand their outreach efforts to eligible veterans, they also recommend claimants seek the assistance of trained service officers that veterans' service organizations like the VFW provide at no cost to all eligible veterans.

VFW-trained service officers last year helped almost 95,000 veterans to recoup more than \$1.2 billion in earned compensation and pension. The VFW also served almost 10,000 more at military installations around the country through a program called Benefits Delivery at

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Discharge, which helps personnel complete VA paperwork prior to their separation or retirement from the military.

"The VFW is the VA's strongest ally in Congress and sometimes its loudest critic, but we recognize that only by working together will the claims backlog problem be solved," said Tradewell. "We are a willing partner in helping to find a permanent solution so that our government can better care for those who have worn the uniform."