# VFW Testifies to Improve Veterans' Access to Care

## Testimony before the House Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Health touched on seven pending bills

Jul 26, 2011

**WASHINGTON —** The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. testified yesterday before the House Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Health on seven pending bills that address issues such as removing hurdles to care for veterans, improving services for those suffering from the invisible wounds of war, and ensuring that VA land is used to serve the mission of VA.

VFW Senior Legislative Associate Shane Barker presented the organization's views on access to health care facilities for veterans with service dogs, broadening the scope of rehabilitative models for veterans suffering from traumatic brain injuries, strengthening zero-tolerance policies for sexual assault inside VA medical facilities, and ensuring that VA's enhanced use-lease agreements conform to VA's mission of providing services to veterans.

The VFW supports many of the ideas proposed by the subcommittee, such as improving Spina Bifida care for children of veterans exposed to Agent Orange and streamlining VA reimbursements to state veterans' homes. The VFW, however, did oppose a bill to create a VA therapy dog training program for troops suffering from post-traumatic stress, calling instead for VA to partner with private organizations already experienced in training therapy dogs.

"We support the idea behind this legislation, but believe it would be better achieved through established private sector organizations with sufficient oversight by VA," said Barker. "Such changes would achieve greater results with no further cost to VA."

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For more hearing information or to read Barker's submitted remarks, click here to access the House VA Subcommittee on Health website.

The VFW will continue to advocate for reforms to better serve the health care needs of American veterans, and to ensure that the VA upholds its promise to care for our nation's warfighters. Keep track of VFW's work on Capitol Hill by subscribing to the Washington Weekly e-newsletter, available through the "VFW in D.C." page on the VFW national website.