

# VFW Helps Disabled Veterans Recoup \$3.7 Billion

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**WASHINGTON** — Last year was a banner year for America's largest combat veterans' organization.

In 2012, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States helped 125,000 veterans to recoup more than \$3.7 billion in earned compensation and pension from the Department of Veterans Affairs. This exceeds 2011's record totals by 23,000 and almost \$1.7 billion, and provides further proof that all eligible veterans and transitioning military members should seek help from an accredited service officer before they file a VA disability claim.

"No wounded, ill or injured veteran should ever complete the detailed 12-page VA claims form without the professional — and free — assistance of an accredited veterans' service officer," said VFW National Commander John E. Hamilton, a Vietnam War Marine Corps rifleman and triple Purple Heart recipient. "And no military person should ever separate or retire without first seeking assistance from a veterans' service officer stationed on their installation through the Pentagon's Benefits Delivery at Discharge program. It literally means the difference between receiving VA benefits or not."

The VFW's nationwide force of 1,200 VA-accredited service officers includes more than 200 working inside the 57 VA regional offices, as well as advocates inside the VA Board of Veterans Appeals, who have a win percentage that surpasses attorney-assisted appeals. VFW's BDD service officers are stationed on Army Forts Bragg, Campbell, Hood, Lewis and Stewart; Marine Corps Camps Lejeune and Pendleton; and in military-populated regions like Las Vegas, Orlando, San Diego, Puerto Rico, and the Military District of Washington, to include Andrews AFB, Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, and MCB Quantico, where the VFW has a special relationship—and contact e-mail ([1Marine@vfw.org](mailto:1Marine@vfw.org)) —with the Marine Corps Wounded Warrior Regiment to assist previously discharged wounded, ill and injured Marines with their VA claims or appeals.

"Healthcare is important to every generation, and with very few exceptions, you cannot get into the world class VA medical system without an approved claim first," said Hamilton. "Seeing an accredited service officer before filing a VA claim needs to be a mandatory checklist item for every veteran and every military Transition Assistance Program class."

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