

VFW Takes COLA Fight to Senate

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WASHINGTON — The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States is now taking its fight to remove an anti-veteran proposal from a federal budget deal to the Senate.

This is necessary because the House of Representatives, by a vote of 332-94 on Thursday, passed a two-year budget deal to fund the government and temporarily end the sequester, but at a huge financial cost to working-age military retirees younger than 62. If the Senate approves and the president signs, the provision would automatically subtract a full percentage point from annual cost-of-living increases, which for an E-7 retiring today at age 40 could amount to a cumulative loss in retirement income of \$80,000 by age 62.

“Although Iraq is over and the war in Afghanistan is winding down, we can’t allow Congress to dismantle the programs they created over the past 12 years,” said VFW National Commander William A. Thien, a Vietnam veteran from Georgetown, Ind. “A nation that sends her military to war has a sacred obligation to care for them when they come home wounded, ill or injured, and to ensure that the one percent of the population who serves isn’t forgotten after the war ends,” he said.

Thien said the COLA penalty breaks faith with military retirees and puts the continued viability of the All-Volunteer Military in jeopardy.

“The very last thing our nation can afford is a mass exodus of midcareer enlisted and officers because they no longer feel welcome or in control of their military careers, and without a professional enlisted and officer corps to train and lead the troops, the entire system falls apart,” he said.

Thankfully, the VFW’s fight to remove the COLA penalty isn’t falling on deaf ears. Sen. Kelly Ayotte (R-N.H.) has already said she couldn’t support a budget agreement that “pays for more federal spending on the backs of our active duty and military retirees — those who have put their lives on the line to defend us.”

“The VFW is very disappointed with the House, but we are grateful to Senator Ayotte for standing with our men and women in uniform, and I now call on the other senators to join her,” said the VFW national commander.

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“We know the federal government needs to curb its spending, balance its budget, and put an end to the sequester, but penalizing military retirees is not the solution,” said Thien, who is asking nearly 2 million VFW and Auxiliary members and veterans advocates everywhere to voice their opposition to the COLA proposal by contacting their senators at <http://capwiz.com/vfw/issues/alert/?alertid=63026806&queueid=10042843021>.

To see how individual members of the House voted, go to <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/votes/113-2013/h640>.