VFW Says President is Keeping His Promise

Feb 28, 2013

WASHINGTON — The national commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. left the Oval Office this morning knowing that President Obama shares his same concerns for properly caring for military veterans, service members and their families.

"It was a very positive meeting and we're grateful for the opportunity," said John E. Hamilton, a combat wounded Vietnam Marine Corps rifleman from St. Augustine, Fla., who is in Washington for the VFW's annual legislative conference, which includes presenting the organization's top legislative priorities before a joint hearing of the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees on Tuesday.

Leading his list of concerns was the looming sequester, which is expected to kick in tomorrow.

“We are very appreciative of the president and Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric Shinseki for taking the VA off the sequester table last spring,” said Hamilton, “but the VFW remains very concerned about mandatory across-the-board cuts in quality of life programs over at the Defense Department, as well as the effects the sequester and the struggling economy could have on future VA budget submissions.”

The VFW national commander said the president was well versed on the impact of sequestration, plus he talked in great depth on VFW’s other high interest topics, such as veterans unemployment, mental healthcare and the VA claims backlog, which along with the ratings accuracy rate are the No. 1 issues Hamilton is asked about when meeting with veterans at VFW Posts around the world.

Hamilton also used the opportunity to praise the great military family support work of first lady Michelle Obama and second lady Dr. Jill Biden. "Our military is fully aware and sincerely appreciative of their outspoken support of military families,” he said. “Likewise, the VFW will continue to do whatever it can to support those who have singularly borne the brunt of almost a dozen years of war."

VFW’s newest concern, the high placement of the new Distinguished Warfare Medal above the Bronze Star and Purple Heart, was also addressed. The president said he would look into the issue.

"America has a sacred responsibility to care for her veterans, military and their families, and though we still have much work to do, I am proud to report the president is ensuring that America’s promise

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is kept both in word and deed," said Hamilton.