VFW Election Day Advice

Oct 15, 2014

WASHINGTON — The House and Senate overwhelmingly passed an emergency funding package in late July to help the Department of Veterans Affairs overcome its nationwide crisis in care and confidence. H.R. 3230, the Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act of 2014, was passed in the House by a vote of 420-5, and in the Senate by 91-3.

With federal midterm elections just weeks away, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States wants America to remember the names of the eight legislators who voted against disabled veterans: Reps. Rick Crawford (R-Ark.), Jack Kingston (R-Ga.), Walter Jones (R-N.C.), Mark Sanford (R-S.C.) and Steve Stockman (R-Texas), and Sens. Tom Coburn (R-Okla.), Bob Corker (R-Tenn.) and Jeff Sessions (R-Ala.). Not on the Nov. 4 ballot are Kingston and Stockman, Coburn, because he is stepping down, and Corker, whose six-year term doesn't expire until 2018.

The hypocrisy of the "no" votes, according to VFW National Commander John W. Stroud, is that between 2003 and 2010, five of them voted to approve more than a half trillion dollars in supplemental war funding with little regard to corresponding offsets or spending oversight, yet in July they would vote against $16 billion to improve the care and services the VA provides to wounded, ill and injured veterans. The three not in office at the time of those war funding votes are Crawford, Sanford and Stockman. Sanford, however, was the governor of South Carolina from 2003-2011, a state that experienced tremendous active, Guard and Reserve deployments, as well as combat casualties.

"By voting no, those eight members failed to stand with America's wounded, ill and injured veterans," said Stroud, a retired Air Force first sergeant from Hawthorne, Nev. "Failing to support America's veterans is inexcusable, and I hope every voting constituent in every home district and state remembers that, because the VFW will do our best to remind them," he said.

"The VFW has a long memory when it comes to remembering those who vote for war but not the warrior, and though we will never tell our members and supporters who to vote for, we will always tell them who in Congress does — or does not — support veterans, service members and their families."

The 13 members of the House and Senate who were not present to vote on H.R. 3230 — for reasons their constituents should ask — are Reps. Lacy Clay (D-Mo.), Emanuel Cleaver (D-Mo.), Scott DesJarlais (R-Tenn.), Colleen Hanabusa (D-Hawaii), Alan Nunnelee (R-Miss.), Mike Pompeo (R-Kan.) and Albio Sires (D-N.J.), and Sens. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.), Thad Cochran (R-Miss.), Kay Hagan (D-N.C.), Tom Harkin (D-Iowa), Pat Roberts (R-Kan.) and Brian Schatz (D-Hawaii).

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Along with Kingston and Stockman, Hanabusa will not be on the November ballot, nor will Senator Harkin. The three representatives lost their Senate primary challenges, and Harkin is retiring after serving five terms in office.