VFW Delivers Testimony Focused on Fixing the VA

Today's testimony caps the VFW Legislative Conference

Mar 02, 2016

Watch VFW National Commander John Biedrzycki Jr.'s testimony now!

WASHINGTON – Today, before a joint hearing of the Senate and House Veterans Affairs Committees, John A. Biedrzycki Jr., national commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S., delivered testimony focused on recommendations for transforming the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide America's veterans with a more effective and efficient health care system. With 25 committee members in attendance, he also used today's opportunity to communicate the VFW's position on potential efforts to move toward privatized VA care.

"We agree that Congress must take a comprehensive look at the Veterans Health Administration to fix what is broken, and we will work with you to identify problems and make those needed changes," said Biedrzycki. "But let me be clear, the VFW is absolutely opposed to the privatization of VA health care! It cannot be replaced! And we will fight any

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS
406 W. 34th Street
Kansas City, MO 64111
Office 816.756.3390
Fax 816.968.1157

WASHINGTON OFFICE
200 Maryland Ave., N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002
Office 202.543.2239
Fax 202.543.6719
info@vfw.org
www.vfw.org

efforts to do so!”



Biedrzycki went on to note that while the VA’s outreach efforts surrounding the Choice Program have improved, the delay of medical documentation transfers and authorization for follow-up care still leaves much room for improvement in scheduling community care appointments.

“VA is working on several IT projects to address this concern, which the VFW supports,” he noted. “Congress must provide VA the necessary resources that have been requested. Congress must also act on VA’s proposal to consolidate its community care programs. This consolidation is critical to the overall health care delivery transformation.”

The VFW national commander pledged the organization’s support for VA Secretary Bob McDonald’s MyVA transformation, and strongly urged Congress to work with the VA to ensure the numerous programs associated with this initiative succeed.

He also took today’s opportunity to convey some important findings derived from a recent survey conducted by the organization to gauge how well the VA is serving women veterans. The survey found that the VA has made progress in addressing the unique needs of women, but improvement is still needed in the areas of health care, outreach and homelessness.

Results indicated that women prefer to receive care from female providers, and are more likely to be satisfied with their overall VA experience when receiving care from a female provider, yet only 40 percent of women were given the opportunity to choose the gender of their primary care provider.

“VA must make every effort to hire more women health care professionals and expand women-specific programs to ensure all women veterans have access to women-specific primary care,” said Biedrzycki.

The survey also indicated 38 percent of those who reported being homeless or at risk of homelessness also reported having children. Homeless veterans with children experience unique challenges when obtaining VA health care and other benefits and services, to include job training opportunities. According to the national commander, “We must find child care options for these veterans now!”

He went on to note the VFW’s support for a variety of topics to include the inclusion of Blue Water Navy ships for the purposes of Agent Orange presumption, expanding eligibility for Gulf War Registry health exams to Afghanistan war veterans, and the Fort McClellan Health Registry Act.

Video of today's testimony will be available at www.vfw.org/VFWDC2016 today at 2 p.m. (EST). Read the full testimony.

Today’s testimony marks the end of the 2016 VFW Legislative Conference, where approximately 500 VFW leaders traveled to the nation’s capital to discuss various veterans issues, as well as the VFW’s expectations of lawmakers.

More notable events from the conference included:

A VFW-hosted dinner at the National Press Club for more than 90 wounded warriors and caregivers from Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, along with their families.

To be awarded this evening to House Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Jeff Miller (R-Fla.) the VFW Congressional Award in recognition of his efforts to improve the VA’s ability

to deliver timely and quality health care.

To be awarded this evening to Pentagon-based, Fox News national security correspondent Jennifer Griffin the VFW News Media Award for her efforts to help America better understand the foreign and domestic threats to America.

Grayson Campbell, sponsored by VFW Post 10555 in Panama CityBeach, Fla., was named the VFW Voice of Democracy competition first-place winner, earning him the T.C. Selman Memorial Scholarship of $30,000.

Shane Stafford, sponsored by VFW Post 10468 in Searchlight, Nev., earned a $5,000 award when he was named the first-place winner of the VFW's annual Patriot's Pen contest.