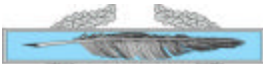




The Whoville Legislative Register



A Publication for Comrades, Sisters & Friends

If You Can Read This Thank A Teacher. If You Can Read It In English Thank A Veteran.



EDITORIAL

-This editorial is a response to a report made by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the support of that report by the National VFW. This is my opinion and does not reflect the opinion of the Department of New York VFW.

It is appalling that both the Federal Government and the VFW National Organization would perpetuate a stereotypical assessment of veterans. The Federal Government via a report from DHS titled "Right wing Extremism Current Economic and Political Climate Fueling Resurgence in Radicalization and Recruitment" and the National VFW by issuing a press release in support of the report. It is a betrayal by the very people who train us to defend this country and by the people who are suppose to have our back.

This report claims, without proof or validation, that returning "disgruntled" veterans are easy prey to violent anti-government right-wing organizations. They accept the premise that veterans are trained killers. We have suffered for many years at the pen of the media over this stereotype. There is no need to itemize the many times Vietnam veterans were demeaned by the media and Hollywood. Nor is there enough space in this newsletter to do so, suffice it to say we the rank and file have not forgotten the hatred and lies that were spread about us for decades.

Section "U" of the report is about "Disgruntled Military Veterans" the "DHS...assesses that rightwing extremists will attempt to recruit and radicalize returning veterans in order to exploit their skills and knowledge derived from military training and combat. These skill and knowledge have the potential to boost the capabilities of extremists..." Two observations need to be recognized. First a large majority of the returning veterans from this War on Terror have probably not touched a weapon since Basic Training or Boot Camp. So unless the terrorists need truck drivers, clerks, cooks, draftsman, lawyers, doctors, dental assistants and a host of other non-combatant jobs there will be many veterans that

will offer no skills needed. However the DHS will have to keep an eye on each of them. Secondly the rightwing extremists will have to compete for this veterans with various law enforcement agencies through out this nation Not limited to but including the FBI, DEA, AFT, Secret Service, US Marshalls and I dare say DHS. Will they be eligible if they are considered potential terrorists?

It is appalling and shameful that the National VFW is not at the forefront of this issue defending the integrity of veterans rather than playing politics. This is not the first time this has happened this year. Recently the Commander-in-Chief defended the President claiming that it was not the President who suggested that disabled veterans pay for their VA health care with their personal health insurance. The claim was that it was the President's Chief of Staff who was promoting the issue. It matters not, if the President gave the Chief of Staff the green light to promote this issue the President gave tacit approval of the proposal.

The rank and file of the VFW are not stupid. If the National organization is trying to make points with the new administration do not do it while standing on the shoulders of veterans. If the administration does something wrong it is wrong, conversely if they do something right it is right. This administration is not different then any others that came before.

I am urging comrades, sisters and friends to write to the President of the United States and to write to the Commander-in-Chief of the VFW that we do not want to be demeaned or labeled as possible terrorists. We deserve better and actually we have earned better treatment then this!

-also in this issue:

The Commanders in Chief's Article

Past C of C response

Link to report

Update memo page 3

Legislative Chairman's Report

Greetings all. I felt that it was important to open this issue up with a indictment of both our national government and our national organization. That is why my report is not in the usual place on the front page.

The beginning of April found me on a train bound for Washington D.C. for the National VFW Legislative Conference. In the past five years I have traveled to this conference on various different means of conveyance and each time it is always a thrill to go to our nation's capital. Joining me for a second time on the newly expanded Legislative Committee was two past State Commanders: Mel Garrett and James McNally. On Sunday we had a busy

schedule of workshop meetings that honed our skills for presenting the agenda to Senators and Members of the House. Unfortunately we were in DC during a recess and all the elected national legislators were in their home states. Mel, Jim and I divided our 31 senators and representatives three ways and paid their office staffs a visit. Mel accompanied me to visit our new Senator Kirsten Gillibrand. We had a fruitful visit with her staff.



The section below in italics is from my article in the "NYS Overseas Veteran"

Rather than reprise both the State and National Agendas that are available on line and in the "Whoville Legislative Register" I am going to note two bills that National is especially keen for us to back and to contact Washington about. There will be more on this in the next issue of the Register. If you want to receive an e-mail copy send me a note at NYVFW_Legislative@Yahoo.com. (There is an underscore between the W and the L.) The big issue is advanced appropriations for VA health care. The VFW fully supports H.R. 1016 and S. 423, bills that would fund the VA health care system a year in advance. The second is the "Women Veterans Healthcare Improvement Act" S.597 and H.R. 1211. This legislation addresses the challenges faced by women veterans and proposes beneficial solutions to help the VA to overcome these barriers by expanding gender specific services. Please write your support of these bills.

Legislative actions never cease, please continue to contact those who we voted into office at all levels.

Past Commander-in-Chief's Response to the VFW & DHS

The following comments are my opinion on a press release that was sent out by the VFW . I suggest you go to the following web site to read the report in question.

<http://88.80.13.160.nyud.net/leak/us-dhs-right-wing-extremism-2009.pdf>

I don't know whose idea this press release was, who's thought process this represents or who approved it, but I find it inappropriate and outrageously insulting.

Without any evidence, with a total lack of objectivity and with a return to the disgraceful Vietnam era practice of smearing all returning war veterans, this "assessment" puts every returning veteran in the crosshairs of all law enforcement departments in the country.

With these words:

(U//FOUO) The possible passage of new restrictions on firearms and the return of military veterans facing significant challenges reintegrating into their communities could lead to the potential emergence of terrorist groups or lone wolf extremists capable of carrying out violent attacks.

The DHS person responsible for this atrocity goes on to describe these potential terrorists in this way:

Rightwing extremism in the United States can be broadly divided into those groups, movements, and adherents that are primarily hate-oriented (based on hatred of particular religious, racial or ethnic groups).

So, returning veterans are not only potential terrorists, but also hateful racists. I can't disagree with the official stand of our organization more vehemently. Assessing threats requires proof, and factual evidence not wild unsubstantiated indictments of a group of American heroes.

We are witnessing a generation of American military which is one of the best trained and most highly motivated groups of men and women to have ever worn the uniform. To have an agency of our government that refuses to refer to America's true enemies as terrorists and refers to terrorist attacks as "man made disasters" toss around in this outrageous "assessment" the term "terrorist" to describe this same group of Servicemen and women is unconscionable.

The Commander in Chief's position, "**The leader of the nation's largest combat veterans' organization said a leaked government document that mentions disgruntled military veterans as potential security threats should have been worded differently, but he takes no issue with the document's purpose: to assess possible threats to the safety and security of the United States.**" is "spin" at its best. Whoever originated the idea for this press release did a disservice to the Chief. Wording the report differently doesn't give any validity to the basic premise of the assessment.

An indictment of returning vets and casting Americans who disagree with gun control, illegal immigration and abortion policies, among others, as potential terrorists

National VFW Response

should be offensive to all of us. Exercising their right to disagree with policy should not subject citizens to offensive labeling.

If there is proof that individuals or groups are engaged in unlawful activities then they should be investigated and where appropriate, prosecuted.

The DHS Secretary has half heartedly apologized to veterans, several U. S. Senators have asked the Secretary for evidence to back up the findings, other veterans groups have condemned the report and veterans and their families across the country are outraged and so am I.

Paul Spera

DHS REPORT WAS A THREAT ASSESSMENT, NOT ACCUSATION\\

WASHINGTON (April 15, 2009) – The leader of the nation's largest combat veterans' organization said a leaked government document that mentions disgruntled military veterans as potential security threats should have been worded differently, but he takes no issue with the document's purpose: to assess possible threats to the safety and security of the United States.

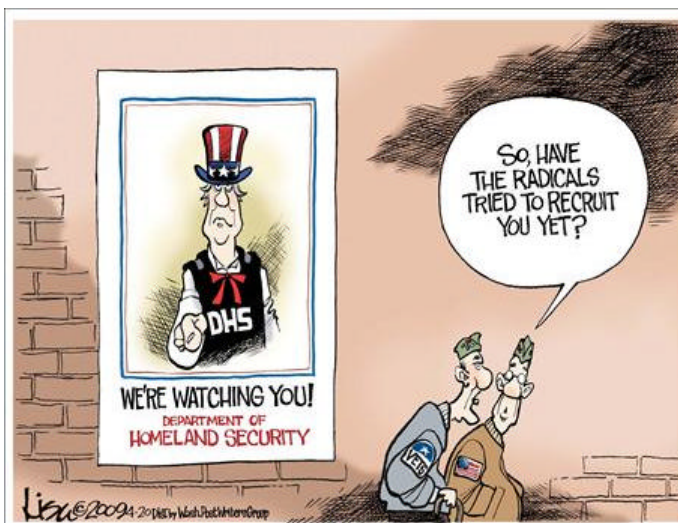
"A government that does not assess internal and external security threats would be negligent of a critical public responsibility," said

Glen M. Gardner Jr., the national commander of the 2.2 million-member Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. and its Auxiliaries.

At issue is an April 7, 2009, Department of Homeland Security document, entitled, "Rightwing Extremism: Current Economic and Political Climate Fueling Resurgence in Radicalization and Recruitment."

The report, which is unclassified but marked "For Official Use Only," surfaced Monday and is causing a furor within some veterans' communities and the news media. It lists disgruntled military veterans as being possible security threats, either by acting as lone wolves or as being targeted for recruitment into rightwing extremist groups who are hate-oriented (religious, racial or ethnic), or driven by domestic issues ranging from the economy and gun control to illegal immigration and abortion, among others.

"The report proves that DHS is doing its job, and that's to protect America and Americans," said Gardner, a Vietnam veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps from Round Rock, Texas.



Homeland Security Secretary Napolitano met with American Legion National Commander Rehbein on 4/24 over the report.

Several observations:

She apologized—if the report was OK as the VFW claimed why did she apologize?

At the very least the Legion had the chance to meet with her on behalf of veterans.

She seems to have apologized for the report being issued not what it said.

In my humble opinion anything short of the report being withdrawn and denounced is not acceptable. How could the Sec. think, even for a minute, that this report was acceptable?

There are people in this country who will believe the report that targets our returning veterans as terrorists. The damage is done!

MEMO

Something borrowed Something new



This has nothing to do with a wedding. We do need your input. Should we support this?

Hello Karl,
Laura Castelli with Senator Klein's office; thank you for getting back to Gwen regarding Senator's Klein's legislation.

We were inquiring as to VFW's opinion/position on the below legislation (S3186; relates to the voluntary display of a "Missing in Attack - On Our Nation" (MIA-OON) flag. The bill has been around for a few years, and we were wondering if you have commented on the bill in the past. We are hoping to move the legislation before the end of the year, so whenever you get a chance, your thoughts/comments would be extremely appreciated.



SUMMARY OF SPECIFIC PROVISIONS :

This act amends executive law by adding a new section 403-C to read display of Missing in Attack on our Nation to be commonly known as the MIA-OON flag. Every county, city, town, and village is encouraged to display the prisoner of war and missing in action flag at the building housing its local legislative body for a period of thirty (30) days every year commencing each September 11. Every state police facility is encouraged to display the MIA-OON flag for a period of thirty days every year commencing each September Eleventh. The MIA-OON flag shall display a black silhouette of a mother holding her child's hand upon a field of yellow. Underneath the image shall be the phrase "You Will Always Be Remembered" in black lettering. The image of mother and child shall symbolize the vulnerability of innocents to terrorist attack, while the yellow shall symbolize that those taken by terrorist attacks will be returned to their loved ones.

- Laura

BILL NUMBER: S 3186 (A4041)

TITLE OF BILL :

An act to amend the executive law, in relation to display and use of the flag of the United States of America in parks and on public buildings

PURPOSE OR GENERAL IDEA OF BILL :

This bill would encourage every county, city, town and village to display the prisoner of war and missing in action flag at the building housing its local legislative body and state police facility.

JUSTIFICATION :

The Missing in Attack on our Nation flag is the inspiration of Ronald James Sorenson, who designed and is promoting this as part of his effort to see that those victims of terror who died on September 11, 2001 are never forgotten. Mr. Sorenson has presented this same flag to a number of other states, including Rhode Island and New Jersey. It is more than appropriate that the state of New York adopt a law to promote the use of this MIA-OON flag. We were after all the principal victims of the September 11th attack, and should take second place to none in our remembrance of them. A gesture like this can of course do nothing to bring back those victims to their grieving friends and families, but at the least it may help to ensure that they remain in our memories.

Advanced Appropriations for VA Health Care

S. 423 & H.R. 1016

The Partnership for Veterans Health Care Budget Reform is made up of nine veteran service organizations who have all urged Congress for more than a decade to reform the system of funding VA health care so that it is sufficient, timely and predictable.



This reform is necessary to ensuring that today's and tomorrow's veterans always have access to the quality medical care they need, have earned, and deserve.



Over the past six years, VA has not received its annual funding on average more than three months after the start of the new fiscal year. While great strides have been made to increase the level of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care funding during the past several years, there have been significant delays in receiving those funds.

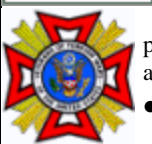


Unlike Medicare or Medicaid, VA health care must rely on Congress and the President to pass a new appropriations law each year that provides VA hospitals and clinics with the funding it needs to treat veterans. But this funding mechanism is unreliable and subject to great political wrangling.

Not knowing when or at what level of funding VA will receive from year to year – or whether Congress will approve or oppose the Administration's proposals – hinders the ability of VA officials to plan their spending for the coming year. Any corporation, for instance, would not perform well without knowing how much money it can spend and when that money would be available for distribution.



Compounding the problem are the new demands placed on the VA system. Since 2001, the number of VA patients has risen by two million – a 50 percent increase. And our newest generation of veterans has increasingly complex mental and physical healthcare needs.



- VA health care funding would remain discretionary, but would be done on a one-year advance appropriations cycle to ensure that it was completed on a timely and predictable basis.



- To ensure sufficiency, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) each year would audit VA's budget projection model and report to Congress on what "current services" should be for the upcoming fiscal years, based upon its review of that model.

- GAO would also conduct regular audits on the accuracy and integrity of the VA budget projection

model.

Congress would continue to set funding levels, continue to maintain all oversight capabilities, and there would be no PAYGO implications because the funding for each year would come from that year's budget allocation.

Go to WWW.fundingforvets.org for more information

Bills S 597 & HR 1211 focus on women, who will constitute 10% of veterans by 2020.

1. Study on Health of Women Veterans from OEF/OIF

- Requires the VA, in collaboration with DoD, to contract with a qualified outside entity for a long term health study of women who served in OEF/OIF. The study will include information on the general health, mental health, reproductive health, and mortality of such women veterans.

The final report will include a detailed description of the findings and recommendations for administrative and legislative action.

2. Study on Barriers to Women Seeking VA Health Care

- Requires the VA to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the barriers to comprehensive health care by the VA.

- The study will survey women veterans who seek or receive health care services from the VA.

- Possible barriers to VA health care for women veterans: perceived stigma of seeking mental health care services, long driving distance, availability of child care, comprehension of services available, perception of personal safety and comfort of women veterans at VA medical centers, sensitivity of health care providers and staff to issues that affect women.

Requires a report outlining the description of the findings and recommendations for administrative and legislative action.

3. Assessment of Women' Health Care Programs at the VA

- Requires the VA to conduct a comprehensive assessment of all health care services and programs provided by the VA for the health care needs of women veterans.

- The assessment shall include the study of specialized programs for women with PTSD, for women who are homeless, for women who require care for substance abuse or mental illnesses, and for women who require pregnancy care.

The VA will be required to develop a program to improve the provision of health care services to women. In addition, the VA shall project resource and staffing requirements to meet the health care needs of women veterans.

4. Enhance VA Sexual Trauma, PTSD, and Family Counseling Programs

- VA's sexual trauma, PTSD, and family counseling programs would be enhanced through requirements for consistent training for care of women veterans.

Requires the VA to report to Congress on the counseling and care provided by these programs.

5. Pilot Program for Child Care for Women Veterans

- Requires the VA to carry out a child care pilot program in three Veteran Service Networks for two years.

Possible forms of child care assistance: stipend for child care centers, development of partnerships with private agencies, collaboration with facilities or programs with other Federal departments.

6. Pilot program for women veterans newly separated from service for counseling in retreat settings.

- Requires the VA to carry out a pilot program to evaluate the feasibility of providing counseling and transition adjustment assistance for women veterans who are newly separated from active duty service in a group retreat setting in which counseling is made available in consecutive period of days.

- The VA shall carry out the pilot program in five sites.

VFW WASHINGTON WEEKLY

April 24, 2009

In This Issue 1. Stimulus Payments in May 2. VFW Testifies before Appropriations Subcommittee

3. House Hearing on PTSD Legislation 4. VA to Begin Accepting GI Bill Applications 5. Marines Want VFW Help

6. VFW Meets with Coast Guard 7. VA Continues Precautionary Screenings

1. Stimulus Payments in May: The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act signed into law in February will begin providing a one-time economic recovery payment of \$250 to people who receive Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, Railroad Retirement, and veterans benefits. If you were eligible for one of these benefits at any time during the months of November 2008, December 2008 or January 2009, you should automatically receive your one-time payment by the end of May 2009. To receive the payment, your address of record must be within one of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, or the Northern Mariana Islands. For more information, read the Social Security Administration pamphlet at: <http://socialsecurity.gov/pubs/10519.pdf>.

2. VFW Testifies before Appropriations Subcommittee: VFW testified before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs. Speaking as part of an *Independent Budget* panel, we presented our views on VA's FY 2010 Construction Budget. Although the committee and Congress made significant inroads in funding construction the last few cycles, we relayed our concerns that much more is needed for the numerous projects currently under construction and those planned for the coming year.

To read the VFW statement, go to: <http://www.vfw.org/index.cfm?fa=caphill.level&did=3702>.

For read the FY 2010 *Independent Budget*, go to: <http://www.independentbudget.org/>.

3. House Hearing on PTSD Legislation: The House Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs held a hearing on VFW-supported legislation that would revise the claims process for PTSD diagnosis. H.R. 952, *The Combat PTSD Act*, would clarify and expand the definition of "combat with the enemy," to include a theater of combat operations during a period of war, or in combat against a hostile force during a period of hostilities. The subcommittee members reviewed the original intent of the law and found VA is placing an unnecessary burden on veterans diagnosed with PTSD and other conditions to prove their combat stressors. If passed, the bill would ease the claims process for veterans who served in non-combat roles in war zones - but who are suffering from post traumatic stress disorder - to receive benefits and treatment from VA. For more on the hearing and the testimony of witnesses, visit the House VA website at: <http://veterans.house.gov/>.

4. VA to Begin Accepting GI Bill Applications: VA will begin accepting applications for the new GI Bill on May 1, three months in advance of the program's Aug. 1 implementation date. VA believes that early enrollment will help identify and correct registration problems, as more than 450,000 veterans are expected to apply for college benefits this year. VA Education Director Keith Wilson said he is personally committed to ensuring the success of the program, and is confident it will launch successfully. VFW played a key role in the passage of the new benefit and will continue monitoring its implementation. For more on the Post-9/11 GI Bill, visit the VA website at: <http://www.gibill.va.gov/>.

5. Marines Want VFW Help: VFW Sr. Vice Commander Tommy Tradewell visited Quantico Marine Base Tuesday for a command briefing on the Marine Corps Wounded Warrior Program, which stood up in 2007 as a regimental command with a nationwide reach. The regiment is currently reaching out to more than 13,000 wounded, ill or injured Marines to ensure they are receiving the proper care and benefits they deserve. The regiment also asked if VFW would provide assistance to help Marines reintegrate back into civilian life. Assistance could range from providing service work, financial support and employment opportunities to sponsoring hometown appreciation events, such as for Purple Heart recipients, among others. "We have a sacred responsibility to help servicemembers and their families wherever they live and in any way we can," said Tradewell, who was accompanied by VFW Washington Office executive director and past national commander Bob Wallace, and by past national commander John Smart, the VA liaison officer to the Wounded Warrior Regiment. If you know of a current or former Marine in need of help, have them call the 24-hour Wounded Warrior Hotline at 1-877-4USMCWW (1-877-478-6299).

To volunteer your VFW Post's assistance, contact Ken Ductor at 703-432-1846 or ken.ductor@usmc.mil.

More information on the Wounded Warrior Program is available at: <http://www.woundedwarriorregiment.org/WWR.aspx>.

6. VFW Meets with Coast Guard: VFW Senior Vice Commander Tommy Tradewell, accompanied by National Security & Foreign Affairs Director Mike Wyson, also met this week with Vice Adm. Clifford Pearson, the U.S. Coast Guard Chief of Staff. The admiral's briefing and roundtable discussion included the Coast Guard's mission, both in the homeland and abroad in the war of terror. Tradewell emphasized the VFW's support for the Coast Guard in a number of areas, and provided the admiral with information on the VFW Military Assistance Program.

7. VA Continues Precautionary Screenings: The VA is continuing to notify and provide free medical screenings to thousands of veterans across the South who had colonoscopies and other procedures with equipment that was not properly sterilized. The precaution applies to:

- 6,400 veterans who received colonoscopies at the Alvin C. York Campus in Murfreesboro, TN, between April 23, 2003, and Dec. 1, 2008. These veterans should call 1-877-345-8555. More information is available at: <http://www.tennesseevalley.va.gov/news/endoscopyquestions.asp>.

- 3,260 veterans who had colonoscopies at the Miami VA Healthcare System Special Care Clinic between May 2004 and March 12, 2009. These veterans should call 1-877-575-7256. A press release is at: <http://www.miami.va.gov/pressreleases/MVAHSSCCUpdate001.asp>.

And to 1,800 veterans who had Ear, Nose & Throat Clinic procedures at the Charlie Norwood VA Medical Center in Augusta, GA, from January through November 2008. These veterans should call 1-888-483-9674. A press release is at: <http://www1.va.gov/augustaga/page.cfm?pg=16>.

If you believe you may be affected or need additional information, please contact the 24-hour Special Care Call Center at 1-877-575-7256, or through e-mail at [Endoscopy Inquiry](mailto:Endoscopy_Inquiry). When submitting e-mail inquiries, please include the facility where you were treated.

VFW WASHINGTON WEEKLY

May 1, 2009

Loyalty Day

In This Issue:

1. VA Funding for the Future 2. VFW Testifies before Senate VA Committee 3. Wounded Warrior Programs 4. House Hearings this Week

1. VA Funding for the Future: How to fund the VA of the future was the topic of a House VA Committee hearing on Wednesday. Representatives from the Partnership for Veterans Healthcare Budget Reform, which includes the VFW, testified in support of advanced appropriations for VA healthcare. Advanced appropriation would ensure funding for veterans healthcare is sufficient, timely and predictable for all who use the system. Both the House and Senate have approved a budget that contains language making it easier to pass legislation that would accomplish this VFW priority goal, but H.R. 1016 and S. 423, sponsored by House VA Chairman Bob Filner (D-CA) and Senate VA Chairman Daniel Akaka (D-HI), still needs your support. VFW asks you to contact your legislators and urge them to co-sponsor these critical bills. To send a message to your legislators, visit the VFW website at: <http://capwiz.com/vfw/issues/alert/?alertid=13251881>.

2. VFW Testifies before Senate VA Committee: VFW testified this week before the Senate VA Committee on VFW-supported legislation that includes:

* S. 263, The Servicemembers Access to Justice Act, would close loopholes and strengthen protections under USERRA.

* S. 407, Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act, would increase the rates of disability compensation and DIC for veterans and their dependents.

* S. 820 would increase the automobile assistance allowance for disabled veterans from \$11,000 to \$22,800. (Note: This is the amount recommended by the VFW co-written Independent Budget.)

* S. 475, The Military Spouses Residency Relief Act would clarify and protect the rights of military spouses under the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA).

Witnesses also included representatives from other VSOs, the VA, Congressional Research Service, and the Director of the Military Spouse Business Organization. Committee members discussed their concern that VA makes it too difficult for veterans to receive services and fair compensation for injuries. Chairman Daniel Akaka (D-HI) and Ranking Member Richard Burr (R-NC) both sponsored legislation to clarify services for TBI patients, to include aid and attendance benefits, and to enhance coverage under VA's insurance programs. For a complete list of bills and VFW testimony, visit the Senate VA Committee website at: <http://veterans.senate.gov/>.

3. Wounded Warrior Programs: The Senate Armed Services Subcommittee on Personnel held a hearing on Wounded Warrior policy and programs. Committee members heard from wounded soldiers and their families, care coordinators, and those responsible for implementing transition services under these programs. The four panels discussed the complexities of managing the myriad of services received from DOD to VA, and the need for consistency among the programs. One panelist, Lt. Andrew K. Kinard, USMC (Ret.), summed up his testimony by asking the committee to continue its oversight into interagency coordination, and to measure how effective each program is in helping the men and women who have sacrificed to recover, rehabilitate, and reintegrate into society.

4. House Hearings This Week:

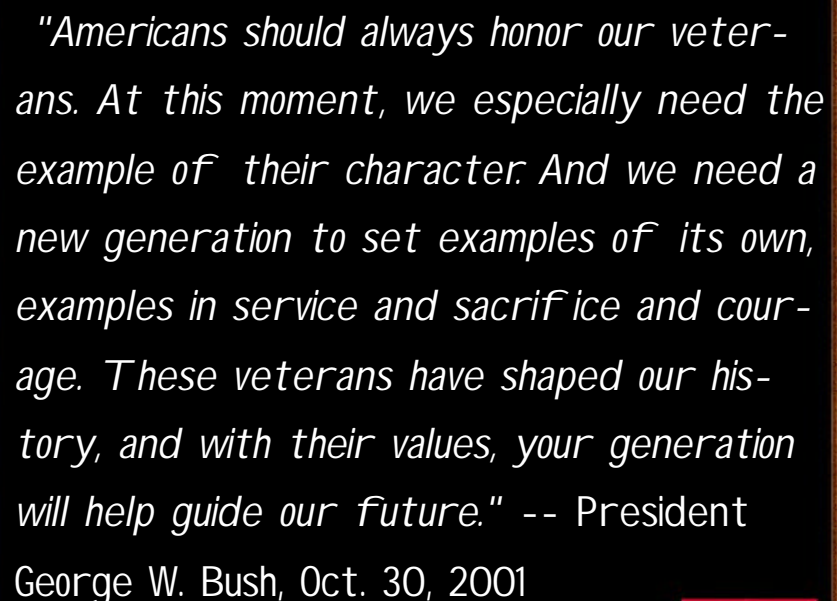
* **Tuesday:** The House VA Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations discussed the Federal Recovery Coordination Program (FRCP), which is a joint VA-DOD program designed to provide support, recovery, rehabilitation and reintegration for severely injured servicemembers, veterans and their families. The program was launched two years ago as part of recommendations made by the Dole/Shalala Commission on caring for America's returning Wounded Warriors. It currently has 257 enrolled veterans and 14 coordinators throughout the country. Witnesses testified to the need for more simplicity in coordination and more continuity of care. FRCP Executive Director Karen Guice discussed challenges the program faces, and her intent to continue to build relationships with everyone at the recovery table.

* **Wednesday:** The House Armed Services Subcommittee on Personnel held a hearing on the Military Health System. A reorganization of the program that provides health care for active duty and retired military members brought forth many questions about TRICARE and how to sustain current benefits. Congress has included, as a part of their budget resolution, language to reject any increases in TRICARE fees for FY 2010. VFW will continue monitoring any changes to this most important benefit.

* **Thursday:** The House VA Subcommittee on Health held a hearing on VA's allocation of funds for mental health care. A recent GAO report found that VA spent less for mental health initiatives than planned, and does not have the appropriate mechanisms in place to track funds. Witnesses were asked to provide successes and the challenges faced by the VA in implementing its Mental Health Strategic Plan, and how to best reach out to those veterans suffering from PTSD, depression and TBI injuries.

For more on any of this week's legislation, visit the Thomas website at: <http://thomas.loc.gov/>.

For the House VA Committee website, go to: <http://veterans.house.gov/>.



"Americans should always honor our veterans. At this moment, we especially need the example of their character. And we need a new generation to set examples of its own, examples in service and sacrifice and courage. These veterans have shaped our history, and with their values, your generation will help guide our future." -- President George W. Bush, Oct. 30, 2001