

VFW Washington Weekly
July 23, 2010

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1. VFW Receives National POW/MIA Family Award: The National League of POW/MIA Families presented its top award to the VFW last night in recognition of the decades of work we have provided to the Full Accounting Mission, to include meeting with senior foreign military, political and diplomatic officials in Washington as well as on the ground in Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, China and Russia. Accepting the award on behalf of the entire organization was Bob Wallace, executive director of the VFW Washington Office, who said the work the VFW does honors the military creed of never leaving a comrade behind, and to help to bring closure to the MIA families who continue to hope and pray for the return of their loved ones.

2. Committees Clear VA Funding: Both House and Senate Appropriations' committees approved their versions of the FY 2011 Military Construction and Veterans Affairs funding bill. The \$141.1 billion package, which still has to be approved by the full House and then reconciled with the Senate, includes many VFW-supported recommendations such as increased funding for VA to help pay for new medical claims as a result of last year's addition of three new illnesses added to the list of presumptions for Agent Orange exposures. The bill would also hire more claims adjudicators, increase mental health and medical research funding. The Senate version specifically mandates \$120 million to implement provisions in P.L. 111-163, (The Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010) including \$60 million for the caregiver and \$36 million for women veterans' healthcare portions of the legislation.

For the House Appropriations Committee website at <http://appropriations.house.gov/>:

For the Senate Military Construction/VA Subcommittee on Appropriations press statement: <http://appropriations.senate.gov/news.cfm?method=news.view&id=11a98484-6ffd-4af1-84f9-1c1b6346e65d>

3. Senate Talks GI Bill Fixes: This week, the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee held a hearing on Senator Akaka's legislation (S. 3447) to make improvements to the Post 9/11 GI Bill program. The VFW led the charge in calling for the Post-9/11 GI Bill, and our testimony pointed out areas to be standardized, simplified and strengthened. We suggested that the committee expand eligibility rules to include Guard and Reserve members, vocational programs, and on-the-job training /apprenticeship programs within Chapter 33.

Our testimony along with a video recording of the hearing can be viewed on the Senate VA Committee website at <http://veterans.senate.gov/>

4. House VA Committee Hearings:

* **Wednesday** - The full committee held a roundtable discussion on innovative treatments for PTSD and TBI. One of the items discussed was Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT); a specialized treatment that uses pressurized pure oxygen to treat tissue damage and a myriad of other conditions, and is being explored as a new treatment for TBI patients.

* **Thursday** - The Subcommittee on Health held a hearing on signature injuries of the current conflicts. Witnesses were asked to discuss VA's specialized services for the severely injured. Included in the discussion were blind rehabilitation programs, spinal cord injury centers, polytrauma centers, and prosthetics and sensory aids services.

For more information on any of the hearings visit the House VA website at:

<http://veterans.house.gov/>

5. Help VFW Win the Pepsi Refresh Grant: The VFW Foundation received a second opportunity to try to win a \$250,000 grant through the "Return the Favor" contest by Pepsi Refresh Grants. You can vote for the entire month of July by going to <http://www.refresheverything.com/ReturnTheFavor>

Your vote will help VFW provide financial assistance to military families in need. The grant will enable VFW help thousands of military families through emergency financial situations, fund military unit "homecoming" and "sendoff" events, and help allow free phone calls to troops in the field to their loved ones at home. The \$250,000 grant will go a long ways towards helping the Foundation continue providing these free programs for our servicemembers and their families. Please "Return the Favor" and vote for the VFW, and encourage your friends, family and neighbors to do so, too. Remember we need your vote to win!

6. Senior Officer Changes: President Obama nominated Gen. James Amos to be the 35th Commandant of the Marine Corps. If confirmed by the Senate, Amos would become the first aviator to hold the Corps' top job, and the service's first assistant commandant to be promoted to the position in almost 30 years. He will succeed Gen. James Conway, whose four-year tour as commandant concludes this summer. Also nominated was Marine Gen. James Mattis to become the new commander of U.S. Central Command. Mattis is currently the commander of Joint Forces Command. He will succeed Army Gen. David Petraeus, who has moved on to command all coalition forces in Afghanistan. Read Amos' bio at <http://www.marines.mil/unit/hqmc/asstcmc/Pages/default.aspx>. Read Mattis' bio at <http://www.jfcom.mil/about/mattis.htm>