

Transition from Service

The VFW's Concern:

Leaving military service is often complicated by service-related ailments, family needs, loss of identity and support networks, and the required training to enter a new career field. Sadly, the initial year following discharge also comes with increased risk for crisis among veterans, including risk of homelessness, justice system involvement, and suicide, heightening the need to ensure all transitioning service members are connected to post-service benefits and resources as quickly as possible.

Accredited representatives are an important resource for transitioning service members and can assist with Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD) claims. Through BDD, service members can file expedited benefit claims and complete medical evaluations before leaving service, enabling VA to provide disability ratings upon discharge. Receiving benefit decisions early helps minimize gaps in essential care, such as mental health counseling and medication management once service members officially leave the military.

In early 2024, VA launched an improved curriculum covering VA benefits and services during Transition Assistance Program (TAP) classes. TAP 6.0 includes offering the opportunity for accredited representatives who are physically present on military installations to connect with service members and assist them with initiating the VA claims process. Data shows this initiative has increased the number of transitioning service members receiving their benefits upon discharge, helping connect veterans more quickly to the benefits, health care, and resources they need to thrive after service.

The VFW believes it is critical that this practice is codified into law and made permanent. Since this is a current VA program, we anticipate this legislative fix would be cost neutral.

The VFW Urges Congress to:

Pass H.R.1845 / S.3938, *TAP Promotion Act*, either as a standalone bill or via the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2027 to codify VA's practice of including accredited claims representatives from national, state, and local organizations in TAP classes. The VFW opposes using the *TAP Promotion Act* to advance any legislative package that reduces or offsets veterans' earned disability compensation, including Section 108 of the *Take Care of America's Veterans Act*.

Note: For H.R.1845 cosponsorship, please email Daniel Carpenter at daniel.carpenter@mail.house.gov.

For S.3938 cosponsorship, please email Kate Durost at kate_durost@king.senate.gov.