



March 9, 2026



First VFW Woman National Commander Testifies Before Congress: VFW National Commander Carol Whitmore delivered the VFW's legislative priorities to Congress in a joint hearing of the Senate and House Committees on Veterans' Affairs. She began her statement by stating, "Our message is simple and resolute: Honor the Contract. When Americans raise their right hand and volunteer to serve, this nation makes a solemn promise. If they are wounded, become ill, or die in service, America will care for them and their families. That promise is not charity ... This is the cost of war." Whitmore also urged Congress to aggressively address unrecognized toxic exposures, ensure that VA direct care and community care function as one system, and pass the Veterans' ACCESS Act of 2025. She highlighted systemic shortcomings in the Foreign Medical Program; called for modernization of CHAMPVA; recommended written, informed consent for VA-prescribed psychiatric medications; and urged passage of several bills including the TAP Promotion Act and Major Richard Star Act. She also pressed the need to fully fund the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency. Whitmore said, "Service members are taught to leave no one behind. That commitment never ends." [Watch the hearing](#), which begins at the 9:25 mark, or [read the testimony](#).



VFW Stands with Troops, Honors Fallen in Operation Epic Fury: As combat operations began in the Middle East under Operation Epic Fury, the VFW reaffirmed its unwavering support for U.S. service members deployed in harm's way. In a [statement](#), VFW National Commander Carol Whitmore urged Americans to keep troops and

their families in their thoughts and prayers, emphasizing the sacrifices made by the all-volunteer force defending the nation and its allies. Days later, the VFW mourned the loss of three American service members killed and five wounded during the operation. Whitmore [extended condolences](#) to the Gold Star families and prayers for the wounded, pledging that the VFW will continue to honor the fallen and advocate for those who serve and sacrifice in defense of freedom. Since the second statement was released, an additional three U.S. service members have been killed by Iran's retaliatory strikes, bringing the total of those killed since Operation Epic Fury began to six.



VA Secretary Speaks at VFW Washington Conference: Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Doug Collins joined conference attendees in an all-hands meeting to provide updates on VA policies and programs, including VA's recent rollback of a days-old regulation that would have significantly changed how VA disability ratings are determined. Reflecting on a promise he made in his early days as VA Secretary, Collins stated, "When the VA does something wrong, we'll fix it." Following swift criticism of the regulation from the veteran community, Collins said of his team, "The minute we saw it was a problem, I suspended it, and within four days, we took it off ... We put it to bed, it's over, it's done, it's not coming back." Secretary Collins covered additional areas including VA health care and Community Care Network reforms, improvements to women's health services and increases in disability claims processing speed.



VFW Condemns Second Block of Major Richard Star Act: The VFW voiced strong outrage after the U.S. Senate blocked passage of the Major Richard Star Act for a second time. VFW National Commander Carol Whitmore said she was "appalled" that the bill was again stopped through procedural opposition. The measure, introduced as S. 1032, was brought forward for unanimous consent by Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs

Ranking Member Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut, but was blocked by Wisconsin Senator Ron Johnson. The VFW emphasized the legislation would correct an injustice affecting more than 50,000 combat-injured veterans. Whitmore urged lawmakers to end the “procedural games,” hold a full hearing and pass the bill to honor veterans’ service and sacrifice. [Read the statement.](#)



Rep. August Pfluger Receives VFW 2026 Congressional Award: The VFW presented its 2026 Congressional Award to Rep. August Pfluger of Texas during the organization’s annual Washington Conference, recognizing his leadership in the 119th Congress and long-standing advocacy for veterans and service members. A U.S. Air Force Academy graduate, combat fighter pilot, and current Air Force Reserve colonel, Pfluger has used his military experience to champion legislation that strengthens veterans’ benefits and access to care. Among his efforts, he introduced the House version of the Aviation Cancer Examination Study (ACES) Act and supported several key VFW priorities, including the Major Richard Star Act and Guard and Reserve GI Bill parity legislation. VFW National Commander Carol Whitmore praised Pfluger as a determined advocate working to improve care and benefits for America’s veterans. [Read the press release.](#)



VFW Podcast Recaps 2026 Washington Conference: A significant week in Washington, D.C., and around the world resulted in an insightful and at times somber, yet energy-filled podcast. Joined by VFW National Commander Carol Whitmore, Washington Office Executive Director Ryan Gallucci, National Legislative Service Director Kristina Keenan and National Veterans Service Mike Figlioli, host Rob Couture engages listeners with Commander Whitmore’s historic testimony before Congress, VA Secretary Doug Collins’ speech before VFW members and more. Listen to episode 60, "Hail to the Chief" on your favorite podcast platform or watch it on the VFW’s YouTube [channel.](#)



MIA Update: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced one burial update for a service member who has been missing and unaccounted for from World War II.

Update:

-- [World War II Marine Corps Pfc. Norton V. Retzsch](#), Arizona

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