



ACTION CORPS WEEKLY



March 10, 2025



VFW National Commander Testifies Before Congress:

VFW National Commander Al Lipphardt testified before a joint hearing of the Senate and House Committees on Veterans' Affairs. The VFW delivered its top legislative priorities of unaddressed toxic exposures, transition from service, alternative PTSD treatments, predatory claims companies, and GI Bill parity. Lipphardt explained that while the benefits afforded to our all-volunteer force may seem generous to those who never served, these benefits are simply the warranty of the service contract each veteran signs before putting on the uniform. "By contract, you must ensure the VA has the resources and staff to provide veterans their full earned benefits," Lipphardt said. "This is not an ask. Honor the contract!" [Read the testimony](#) or [watch the hearing](#), which begins at the 15:14 mark.



VFW Testifies on Claim Sharks Legislation:

VFW National Legislative Director Pat Murray testified at a House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs hearing on the disagreement about fees for services rendered in the preparation of initial and supplemental claims for veterans' benefits. "The VFW continues to lead the charge against unaccredited, unscrupulous actors we call Claim Sharks who charge service members, veterans, and survivors illegal fees," Murray stated. "Our resolutions urge Congress to pass legislation that protect VA beneficiaries from predatory companies and individuals attempting to bypass the VA accreditation system and monetize the disability or death benefits of veterans and surviving families." [Read the testimony](#) or [watch the hearing](#), which begins at the 8:34 mark.



VFW National Commander Meets with VA

Secretary: VFW National Commander Al Lipphardt and VFW Washington Office Executive Director Ryan Gallucci met with VA Secretary Doug Collins to share the VFW's concerns and priorities. Central to the discussion was understanding the Secretary's plan for reducing the VA workforce amid concerning reports from VFW members that key services were affected by recent layoffs. The discussion was constructive, and the VFW sees opportunities to work with Secretary Collins on issues like consistent care delivery by VA and community providers, as well as modernizing benefits delivery. Lipphardt emphasized that the VFW would hold him to his commitment not to reduce care or benefits for veterans with the new directives.



VFW-SVA Legislative Fellows on Capitol Hill:

Five 2024/2025 VFW-SVA Legislative Fellows traveled to our nation's capital to participate in the VFW Washington Conference. Joining VFW delegations from their respective states, the fellows met with key staffers and congressional members, including some who serve on the House and Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs. The fellows focused their discussions on the VFW's support for the *Guard and Reserve GI Bill Parity Act of 2025* that seeks to make any day a National Guard or Reserve member is in uniform and receiving military pay count toward Post-9/11 GI Bill eligibility requirements. The VFW-SVA Legislative Fellows pictured from left to right are:

- Polina Washington, Army veteran, The University of Texas at Austin
- Ralph Figueroa, National Student Veteran of the Year, Army veteran, California State University
- Jennifer Ross, Air Force veteran, Cornell University
- Noah Sorseth, Army veteran, George Fox University
- Terry Traylor, Marine Corps veteran, North Dakota State University

Not shown:

- Jose Ayon, Army veteran, University of Southern California
- Casey Stege, Army veteran, Baylor University



Representative Receives VFW Congressional Award: The VFW presented its 2025 Congressional Award to Rep. Derrick Van Orden (WI-3) for his outstanding service and years of unwavering support of veterans, service members, their families, and survivors. “In Representative Van Orden, we have found a devoted, passionate and determined advocate for our military and veteran communities,” said VFW National Commander Al Lipphardt. “His resolve for accountability and action on some of our most pressing issues is clear, and we could not be more thrilled to have him in our corner not only as a member of Congress but also as a VFW Life member.” Accepting his award, Van Orden said, “No one is going to take care of us but us. Notice, I didn’t say Republican or Democrat. Sixty-nine percent of my legislation is bipartisan, because if it makes sense I do it, and if it doesn’t I don’t. And we need more of that here.”



VFW Department of California Accepts Award: VFW Department of California is the recipient of the 2024-2025 National Legislative Service Award. The criteria for the award include quality reporting of legislative activity, advocacy actions taken, and resulting accomplishments. VFW National Commander Al Lipphardt presented the award to Department of California’s National Legislative Committee members and leadership.



MIA Update: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced one identification and five burial updates for service members who have been missing and unaccounted for from World War II and the Korean War.

Identification:

-- [Korean War Army Sgt. George M. Barbieri](#)

Updates:

-- [World War II Army Pfc. Kenneth D. Burgess](#), Kentucky

-- [World War II Army Pvt. Charles W. Smalley](#), Indiana

-- [World War II Army Cpl. Ernest H. Ulrich](#), California

-- [World War II Army Air Forces Sgt. James H. Murray](#), Virginia

-- [World War II Army Pvt. James G. Loterbaugh](#), Ohio

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As always, we want to hear your advocacy stories. To share your stories or photos with us, simply email them directly to vfwac@vfw.org.