



Caretaker Benefits and VA Budget Tops Legislative Conference Business

Nov 15, 2024

VFW held its annual fall Legislative Conference from Sept. 9-11 at the nation's capital, marking a significant event in veterans' advocacy for the year. VFW members from across the country descended on Capitol Hill to advocate for VFW's legislative priorities with lawmakers.

The conference began with a new member orientation on Sept. 9, followed by a legislative briefing for members the next day. Delegates then took VFW's advocacy efforts to Capitol Hill by meeting with legislators and lawmakers through the end of the conference.

"This was a pivotal moment for the VFW," VFW Commander-in-Chief Al Lipphardt said. "Our grassroots volunteers work tirelessly year-round on veterans' issues in their communities. In September and March, they bring that same dedication to Washington, emphasizing the VFW's critical priorities."

A key issue supported by VFW members included the Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act (H.R. 8371). If approved by Congress and enacted by President Joe Biden, the Elizabeth Dole Act would improve and expand home and community health care services for disabled veterans being cared for through the VA's family caregiver program.

VA's 2025 budget shortfall also was a priority for VFW. Delegates urged Congress to address the VA's budget deficit before the Sept. 20 deadline to avoid consequences for veterans and their families. If no action was taken, veterans compensation could have been delayed in October, the start of the 2025 fiscal year.

In July, VA informed Congress that it estimated that the VA's budget was about \$12 billion less than it would need for the 2025 fiscal year. VA also reported that there would be a \$2.9 billion shortfall for the 2024 fiscal year budget. As of the VFW magazine print deadline, Congress had not taken any action on the VA budget.

The conference also coincided with the anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks of New York City's World Trade Center and the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia. VFW leaders, members and staff held a ceremony at the VFW Washington Office, and then followed with

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a press conference that highlighted the negative impacts of not properly funding the VA.

This article is featured in the 2024 November/December issue of [VFW magazine](#).