

VFW Chief Demands Lawmakers 'Honor the Contract' with Veterans

National Commander delivers the organization's legislative priorities for the 119th Congress

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WASHINGTON — Heeding the call to “march forth,” Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and VFW Auxiliary members packed the house alongside Commander-in-Chief Al Lipphardt as he testified before a special joint hearing of the House and Senate Committees on Veterans’ Affairs held today.

Armed with a DD Form 4, which is the standard enlistment contract for those entering service into the Armed Forces of the United States, Lipphardt launched into his testimony with the document held high and his comrades amassed behind him in the Dirksen Senate Office Building chamber where the hearing was being held. Amidst the administration’s push to cut government spending, Lipphardt reminded lawmakers that the enlistment contract is “more than an employment agreement” and that by law, service members are entitled to receive pay and benefits.

“This isn't charity. This is a contract,” said Lipphardt. “Everyone who served honorably, like every member of the VFW, met our end of this agreement. We demand our leaders do the same. By contract, you must ensure the VA has the resources and staff to provide veterans their full earned benefits. This is not an ask. Honor the contract!”

Lipphardt then thanked both veterans’ affairs committees for drafting and passing the PACT Act in 2022, the historic bill that provided health care and benefits to generations of veterans exposed to toxins during their time in service. He then pointed out gaps in coverage and that Congress still has more work to do.

“The military is an inherently hazardous profession,” said Lipphardt. “We must take care of our K2 veterans, those who served at Fort McClellan, veterans exposed to radiation, ‘forever chemicals,’ and others. The VFW urges Congress to conduct oversight of VA’s presumptive process because veterans cannot keep waiting.”

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Lipphardt then explained the difficulty for service members to transition from military to civilian life and how vital it was for both the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs to actively support them through that process. He called on Congress to pass legislation like the TAP Promotion Act and to establish a position in the DOD to ensure service members are given every opportunity to thrive in their transition.

“The VFW urges Congress to establish an Under Secretary of Defense for Transition,” said Lipphardt. “This position is essential for effective management and accountability. Improving transition has the potential to enhance recruitment and retention, lowers risk for suicide, and sets veterans on a path to success.”

Lipphardt then transitioned into addressing challenges veterans face with mental health. He asserted the VA sometimes overprescribes medications, particularly antidepressants. He then implored Congress and the VA to research alternative treatments and solutions for veterans to break the cycle of overmedication.

“The VFW believes there are additional ways to effectively treat PTSD. VA should receive funding to research and deliver those treatments today,” said Lipphardt.

The next priority Lipphardt delivered was a subject the VFW has railed against for years – unaccredited, predatory claims consultants the VFW calls Claim Sharks. He described their practices, such as obtaining fraudulent medical opinions from their own providers, accessing veterans’ login credentials for VA websites and call centers, and charging veterans the equivalent of 5-10 months of their future disability payments.

“The VFW understands that some veterans are willing to pay for claims help,” said Lipphardt, “but these companies cannot be allowed to line their pockets with taxpayer dollars at the expense of disabled veterans.”

Lipphardt then advocated on behalf of members of the National Guard and Reserve. He mentioned how while they deployed both domestically and abroad at a high rate since Sept. 11, 2001, they are denied the same VA educational benefits as their active-duty counterparts. He asked Congress to pass the Guard and Reserve GI Bill Parity Act of 2025 to allow any day in uniform for which military pay is received to count toward Post-9/11 GI Bill eligibility.

“The time is long past for parity. This inequity must end now,” said Lipphardt.

Lipphardt addressed a long-standing VFW legislative priority – passing the Major Richard Star Act and other legislation to provide full concurrent receipt to all deserving veterans. He pointed out how Congress passed the Social Security Fairness Act in the last session, ending a similar unjust offset for social security recipients.

“It is time to correct this injustice for our military retirees,” said Lipphardt. “The VFW calls

on Congress to fix this now.”

Lipphardt finished his testimony on a personal note, reminding Congress of the sacrifices made for the nation. He named five soldiers he served with during the Vietnam War who were killed in combat – Pvt. Lewis Sloan of East Point, Georgia, Cpl. Kenneth Adams of Santa Barbara, California, Cpl. Philip Adams of Croton Falls, New York, Pfc. Robert Waddell of Batavia, Ohio, and Cpl. Rodney Loatman of Newark, New Jersey.

“I would ask these men to stand and be recognized, but they can’t. Their names are on the Vietnam Wall along with all those who gave the last full measure of devotion to this nation acknowledged by the contract we each signed.

“Our nation must never forget our warfighters,” said Lipphardt.

Video of today’s testimony is available to watch and share [here](#).

Read Commander Lipphardt’s full testimony [here](#).