

VFW Reminds Members to Stay Focused Amid Confusion in the Capital

The following is a message from VFW National Commander Al Lipphardt

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WASHINGTON — Over the past few weeks, I, like many of you, have been inundated daily with news from our nation's capital about the current administration's new way of doing business. Between the reports of mass employee layoffs, funding freezes, program cuts, and agency restructures across the entire government, it is hard to know exactly what to sound the alarm about. Upfront, I want to tell you the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) know our members and other veterans are concerned. We've received a multitude of calls and emails from veterans worried about what's happening with federal benefit programs and the federal workforce, to include 1,000 VA probationary employees who were let go yesterday. They've asked if their VA benefits will be cut, or health care and services be diminished because of the confusion in Washington, D.C.

Make no mistake, the staff at the VFW Washington Office is working hard behind the scenes to protect you and ensure you receive the care and benefits you have earned. When the hiring freeze was announced earlier this month, the VFW intervened to make sure that critical VA positions were left alone. When the funding freeze was announced, VFW worked around the clock to ensure the Office of Management and Budget maintained all 44 critical VA programs. When the federal buyout and reductions in force were announced, we insisted that VA communicate which critical positions would be exempt. Each step of the way, we have received the answers we've needed. VA payments for disability and education went out on time. Hiring for critical positions resumed, and more than 43,000 VA employees were exempted and retained in critical care and benefit delivery positions.

In December, we put our stake in the ground, insisting that leaders "Honor the Contract" for veterans' benefits. In his confirmation hearing, Secretary Collins refuted the notion that veterans would be means tested to receive their earned disability. He reiterated this point in a public statement earlier this week. VFW is going to hold him to this. We will make sure that Secretary Collins "Honors the Contract."

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We know there is a lot of uncertainty for veterans today. For those of us that have seen combat, we know not to be concerned with every explosion that happens on the battlefield. Not every round flying overhead is aimed at us. That is why we must not get distracted and stay focused on the mission, push toward the objective and when necessary, be ready to react to contact.

Rest assured, my staff and I will continue to be vigilant, ensure that veterans' personal information is protected and VA provides the care and benefits veterans have earned. We are watching your six. I want to thank the VFW members and veterans who have reached out to us so far, and I want to encourage you to keep it up. This is how we work together to make sure that our nation "Honors the Contract" to care for our veterans.