

VFW Will Not Stay Silent While America's Heroes are Dragged Through the Mud

The following statement is from the VFW National Commander Carol Whitmore

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WASHINGTON — The Washington Post has decided that America's veterans, those who have fought, bled and sacrificed for this nation, are the new villains of these last couple of weeks. Their recent reporting, suggesting that veterans are filing "dubious" or "fraudulent" disability claims to milk the VA system, is nothing short of disgraceful. It's a smear campaign against the very people who have given this country everything it has asked for, and more.

Let's be clear: This isn't investigative journalism. It's character assassination. By cherry-picking anecdotes and twisting statistics, the Post is peddling a dangerous and insulting narrative, insinuating that America's veterans are cheats, hustling for benefits they don't deserve. That lie dishonors every man and woman who has ever raised their right hand and sworn an oath to defend this country "against all enemies, foreign and domestic."

Here's the truth the Post won't print: Veterans aren't gaming the system. They are the system's victims who are forced to navigate a bureaucratic labyrinth that too often grinds them down, delays their care and treats them with suspicion from day one. Many spend years fighting for recognition of their injuries, only to be met with accusations of deceit by those who have never spent a single day in uniform.

And let's talk about those injuries. They are not theoretical. They are not "questionable." They are the direct, documented consequences of military service and include blast concussions, toxic exposures, crushed joints, traumatic brain injuries and the invisible wounds of war that follow veterans long after they've come home. To suggest these men and women are exaggerating or fabricating their pain is not just offensive, it's immoral.

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If the Post's reporters had done any honest research, they would understand that the rise in disability claims is not proof of fraud, it is proof that modern warfare has changed. Thanks to advances in battlefield medicine, more soldiers survive their wounds today than ever before. But survival is not the same as recovery. Today's veterans are surviving with prosthetic limbs, chronic pain, PTSD and lungs scarred by burn pits, and somehow, the Post thinks the problem is that too many of them are getting the help they need.

Even more troubling is how this kind of reporting risks driving a wedge between veterans and the very public they swore to protect. By framing veterans as opportunists, it plants seeds of mistrust making ordinary Americans question the legitimacy of the men and women who fought for their freedoms. That is not just misguided; it is harmful. Veterans and the American people are on the same side. We share the same values, the same communities and the same belief in service and sacrifice. Intentional or not, attempts to pit one against the other only undermine the unity that defines this nation.

By reintroducing this harmful narrative, veterans who were already reluctant to file a claim for VA benefits will now be less likely to reach out to VA-accredited claims representatives for assistance. Representatives like Cindy Noel, VFW assistant director of field operations and a stalwart pre-discharge claims representative singled out by the Post, work tirelessly to connect transitioning service members around the world with the VA care and benefits they have earned. The Post's assertion of veterans' VA disability claims being "dubious" will cause a whole new generation of veterans to choose suffering in silence over risking being scrutinized, ridiculed and shamed for seeking the help they need and deserve.

Let me remind the editors of The Washington Post of something they seem to have forgotten: When Americans go to war, they sign a contract with their government. That contract says: You serve. You sacrifice. And when you come home broken — physically, mentally or spiritually — your nation will take care of you. That is not a suggestion. That is a sacred obligation. It is the cost of freedom. Maybe the Post should consider that before scheming to exploit the plight of service men and women to squeeze more paid subscriptions out of their readers.

To accuse veterans of "milking" the system is to accuse them of betraying that contract. But they are not the ones breaking faith. The Post is. The real betrayal lies in questioning the legitimacy of those who've already paid the highest price imaginable.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars will not stay silent while America's heroes are dragged through the mud by the suspicion and misinformation of armchair cynics and data manipulators. We will absolutely stand up to anyone who tries to discredit our VA-accredited claims representatives. If The Washington Post wants to expose fraud, it should start with the broken promises and bureaucratic neglect that plague the VA, not with the veterans who depend on it. The problem to fix is not the integrity of our veterans, it's the inefficiency and delay that too often define the system meant to serve them.

Our veterans do not owe America another thing. America owes them. It is time to stop the slander, stop the suspicion and start honoring the only contract that truly matters — the one written in sacrifice, sealed in blood and signed in service to the United States of America.

It's time to Honor the Contract.