

# BULLETIN – MARCH 2024



## JANET LONG, CHAIRMAN LEGISLATIVE

When I come in contact with veterans the first thing I do is Thank them for their service and then I ask them if they are signed up with the VA. Too many times the answer is no, I don't have any problems and I don't need them. I always come back with, you may not need them now, but someday you may and if you are signed up now things will go much better when you do need the VA system.

As the largest organization of combat veterans the VFW understands the frustrations that can arise when filing a claim with the Department of Veterans Affairs. The claims process can be confusing and one that service members and veterans shouldn't try to navigate alone. That's why the VFW'S National Veterans Service was established to help all veterans, service members, their families and survivors. The NVS consists of nationwide network of VFW Accredited Service Officers. If you or a veteran you know needs help filing a claim, the first person to talk to is your VFW Post Service Officer. If he cannot help you then contact the Department Service Office at (312)980-4284 or your County Veterans Assistance. These people are here to help you at no charge. We need to keep steering our veterans to these Service Officers and keep them away from the Claim Sharks.

The VFW urges Congress to pass H.R. 1139/S. 740, *GUARD VA Benefits Act*, to reinstate penalties for charging veterans and survivors unauthorized fees relating to claims for VA benefits.

### **Women Veterans**

Ensuring women veterans receive veteran's benefits and services that honor their brave military service is one of the VFW's top priorities. Currently, women comprise 15 percent of the active-duty military and 19 percent of the Guard and Reserve. With the steady increase of women wearing our nation's uniform and their increased role in military operations, it has never been more important that we ensure women veterans have a VA that is ready and able to care for them when they transition back to civilian life. The overwhelming majority of women veterans want VA to expand access to women-specific health care, which includes hiring more VA health care professionals who are able to identify and treat their unique health care needs. More specifically, women veterans want the opportunity to receive their health care from women health care providers. The VFW has urged Congress and VA to expand its Designated Women's Health Primary Care Provider model to mental health clinics and other health care specialties. This would ensure all women veterans have access to health care professionals with specialized women's health care training. The VFW has also urged VA to allow all women veterans to choose the gender of their health care provider.

There is much more information on women veterans that I believe is very interesting – go to [vfw.org](http://vfw.org) click on advocacy then on women veterans.

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2024 is election year. I urge everyone to keep in contact with your local, state and national officials, the one in office and the one running for an office. We need to pay attention to the W's – **Why** they are running and **What** their views are, especially their views on Veteran's issues. With so many politicians who have never served or had any family member serve in the United States military don't understand what our veterans and their families face every day. We, as members of the VFW and Auxiliary need to vote for people who will support our veterans.

The VFW Washington Conference is March 3-7, 2024 where many of our state leaders and member of the VFW and Auxiliary will be attending and meeting with our Legislators concerning our 2024 Priority Goals. National Commander-in-Chief Duane Sarmiento will be testify before the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees on behalf of veterans.

Our Goals for 2024 are

Budget

Education, Employment and Transition Assistance

Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs

Health Care

Military Quality of Life

National Security Foreign Affairs and POW/MIA