

RPTS COCHRAN

DCMN SECKMAN

LEGISLATIVE PRESENTATION OF THE VETERANS  
OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

Tuesday, March 8, 2011

House of Representatives,

Committee on Veterans' Affairs,

Joint with

United States Senate,

Committee on Veterans' Affairs,

Washington, D.C.

The committees met, pursuant to notice, at 9:35 a.m., in Room 345, Cannon House Office Building, Hon. Jeff Miller [chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs] presiding.

Present: Representatives Miller, Bilirakis, Benishek, Buerkle, Flores, Johnson, Runyan, Filner, Michaud, Walz, Barrow, and Carnahan.

Senators Murray, Burr, and Boozman.

The Chairman. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

It is a pleasure to welcome each and every one of you to the Joint House-Senate hearing today with the Veterans of Foreign Wars. I want to extend my hearty welcome to National Commander in Chief Richard Eubank.

We look forward to hearing your testimony, sir, in a few moments.

In the interest of time, we will have some opening statements. I would ask other committee members if they can submit theirs for the record so we can hear from the commander and also have an opportunity to ask questions after his testimony.

I am honored to be here this morning with so many of you. Each of you has sacrificed for your country and continues to give of yourself today through your membership in VFW and its Auxiliary. On behalf of the committee, I thank you for making the trip to Washington to share your legislative agenda with our committees and our Congress. I actually ran into one of your members who said this is his 50th year coming here to this, which is a testament in itself.

I would also like to take a moment to recognize the VFW members who here, like myself, are proud to call home to the white sand beaches and sunshine of the State of Florida.

Those from Florida, if you would stand or wave, I would certainly appreciate it.

You don't know what white sand is?

Thanks, again, for all you do, Floridians. I look forward to meeting with the delegation later while you are here in Washington.

I want to say a special thank you also to the Senior Vice President of the VFW Ladies Auxiliary, Ms. Gwen Rankin. Ms. Rankin is here on behalf of Auxiliary President Cortina Barnes, who is unable to be with us today.

Thank you for your attendance, Ms. Rankin, and I congratulate you on the fine work of the VFW Ladies Auxiliary.

I am pleased to be joined by my colleague across the aisle and across the Capitol, Chairman Murray. I mentioned last week when we met how much I look forward to working with you in particular.

I would also like to salute your predecessor, Senator Akaka, who last week announced he will be retiring after over three decades of service in the Congress and well before that as a World War II veteran. Please pass along to Senator Akaka our thanks for his years of dedicated service to veterans. He will be missed.

One area where I know we all share a common interest is the implementation of the Caregiver Assistance Program,

required by Public Law 111-163. We worked hard with our friends in the Senate to get that bill to the President, and it troubles me that the first public plan the administration put forth regarding this important program was 3 months overdue and met with serious concern from advocates and stakeholders. Even worse, and I am hoping I am wrong about this, but it looks like the administration's response has been to dig its heels in. This must, and it will change.

As a first step, our Health Subcommittee will be holding a hearing on Friday on the implementation of the Caregiver Program to ensure that VA's plans are consistent with congressional intent and established in a timely manner to provide important support to those who need it as quickly as possible. I know I speak for every one up here when I offer my commitment to get this right for veterans and for their caregivers.

Commander Eubank, as more of our service members return every day from fighting in the war on terror, it is a comfort to know that VFW members nationwide stand ready to support them. At a time of continuing conflict and fiscal constraint, the services provided by great organizations like yours have never been more necessary. Your innovative assistance and support programs are available to service members and their families from the day they enter service to years beyond their discharge date.

Your programs and the national military services that assist our active duty service members, including Operation Uplink, the Unmet Needs Program, the Military Assistance Program, providing grant money to local VFW posts to host events to assist military units around the globe.

Commander, the VFW's efforts don't stop when the service member leaves the military either. You have 6,000 regularly scheduled VFW volunteers that provide more than 1 million hours of service annually to veterans and their families. Whether it is by volunteering at VA hospitals and clinics, assisting fellow veterans with their claims, or by providing final honors for veterans as they are laid to rest, the VFW volunteers do it all.

This is something that we can all be proud of, and I personally say, thank you, sir, for VFW and its efforts.

Commander, as your testimony states, there are significant challenges ahead for VA and for this committee, not the least of which is reforming the claims processing system and ensuring appropriate funding levels for veteran programs in a time of fiscal constraint. I was very pleased to see your testimony echoed my calls for rigorous oversight to ensure that the tax dollars provided to VA are effectively and efficiently used to improve veterans' lives. In this endeavor, I stand with you and this committee stands with you wholeheartedly.

VFW members were the boots on the ground in conflict and are now the boots on the ground at VA. This Congress is going to need your expertise in identifying areas where VA could and can do better.

I want today's hearing to be the beginning of a open and ongoing conversation, a dialogue between us as partners in creating a better future for American veterans and their families. Commander, I look forward to starting that dialogue with your testimony this morning, and I appreciate you being here.

I now yield to Chairman Murray.

Senator Murray. Thank you very much, Chairman Miller, and thank you for your kind comments about Senator Akaka. I will absolutely pass those on. I also want to join you in welcoming the Veterans of Foreign Wars here today to present their views and insights with all of us, and I want to thank the Ladies Auxiliary for joining us as well. I know how important the women's voice is on these issues, and I thank you all for coming to share your perspective as well.

I also want to mention those VFW members who have travelled the 2,500 miles from my personal favorite Washington State to join us today, Jerry Herker, Richard Whipple, Diana Small and John Rusk.

You know, just about 2 weeks ago, I held a listening session at VFW Post 51 in my home State in Spokane. It was

my very first public event back home as Chairman, and I was there to hear from our local veterans and to bring their concerns back here to Washington, D.C.

I have got to tell you, not only did those VFW members show up; they packed that hall. To tell you the truth, it didn't really surprise me a bit. Time and again, I have seen how engaged and personally vested VFW members are in the issues facing veterans, not only here on Capitol Hill, but also back home at their local VA facilities, and it is the work of those VFW members and all volunteers that strengthen our local communities, keep the VA accountable, and keep the work of our committees moving forward.

And for that, I thank all of you.

As the new chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, I am ready to continue my work partnering with all of you to hold the VA up to the standard our Nation's veterans deserve. It is something I have personally committed myself to over my 16 years as a member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, and even before that from my personal experiences as the daughter of a World War II veteran and Purple Heart recipient, and from my work as an intern helping to care for wounded Vietnam veterans in Seattle.

I know that when we send our young people off to fight a war, the last thing they should have to do is to fight for

the care they deserve when they return home, and I know that ensuring that the VA is working for our veterans and not against them often begins with the VA budget.

Now, let me say that, on balance and given that other agencies are facing some severe budget cuts, the VA's 2012 budget is a very good starting point from which to work. The President has requested an overall increase of \$5.9 billion in discretionary spending over last year. And while health care spending is in good shape in that request, there are some weaker points in the budget.

As your testimony notes, the proposed cuts in spending for construction and non-recurring maintenance are very troubling. I agree with you; we cannot reduce our commitment to the facilities that make up the VA health care system, and I look forward to working with you on that issue.

I also wanted to note that you make some very good points about making cuts to programs that are wasteful and aren't working for veterans and taxpayers. But as discussion continues here in Congress about where to reduce funding, we must remember that, like all budgets, the VA budget is a reflection of our values and it impacts the lives of millions of our veterans and their families.

One of the things that we are working on right now that has a direct impact on many veterans and their recovery from

the visible and invisible wounds of war is the Caregivers Program that Chairman Miller just mentioned. We need to make sure that it is put in place quickly and as Congress intended. I am heartened to see that you have identified this as one of your priorities as well.

As the chairman said, when the caregivers bill was voted on in Congress, not a single "no" vote was cast against it. So let me say that again. In an environment that is often overly partisan, every voting member agreed to this new benefit. Yet now we are seeing delays and questions about who is eligible. That is unacceptable, and I am committed to working with Chairman Miller, Representative Filner and Senator Burr to change that.

And once that Caregiver Program gets up and running and in a manner consistent with the intent of Congress, we will be in a better position to think about ways to expand the benefits to veterans of earlier wars.

I want to thank the VFW for your support and work on the caregivers law and on so many initiatives that were passed in the last Congress.

I also look forward to working with VFW to address many of the other issues facing our veterans, whether it is making sure women veterans have the facilities and care they need as they enter the VA in higher and higher numbers; fighting once and for all to end the epidemic of veterans'

homelessness; addressing our broken benefit claims system; or making sure that veterans who have all the skills and discipline to succeed in the working world get their shot at a job when they come home. We have got a lot more to do, and we have got to work together at every step.

As I mentioned before, two weeks ago, I sat down with many of the veterans whose lives will be impacted by this budget back in my home State. I heard from a Vietnam veteran with PTSD whose son, a National Guard member, just recently committed suicide after returning from the battlefield with PTSD.

I heard from a female Iraq veteran who told me when she calls the VA, she continually gets asked if she is calling for her husband.

I heard from veterans about the claims backlog, barriers to employment, access to care, holes in the education benefit, and much more.

So our work is not done. These veterans deserve better, and I look forward to working with all of you to care for all of our Nation's veterans.

Thank you very much.

And thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman. I yield now to the ranking member, Mr. Filner.

Mr. Filner. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Welcome, Commander. I look forward to your testimony.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to submit my opening remarks for the record.

What I just want to take a couple of minutes to state is to pay tribute to one of your members who for me personifies what the VFW is, what it does and why it is so important to us. There is a guy from my district, Lt. Bobby Price.

Lieutenant, will you please stand up for a second.

Thank you for being here. Thank you for what you do.

With your permission, Mr. Chairman, Commander, I would just like to just say something about Bobby Price. He has a battle with cancer right now that is probably tougher than anything he had to face on active duty. But here is a man who has spent his whole post-active duty life working for all the veterans in this country. He never lets up. He never stops. He is in everything.

As you know, Commander, he is active in the VFW, both locally, nationally, statewide. He is active in other organizations. But at a local level, our county councils, for example, advisor committees, for example, he is there.

Bobby, when I first met you, they said I had to meet all the active veterans when I started running for Congress, so Bobby Price was first on my list. I told Bobby, the first thing I want to do is be on the Veterans' Committee.

He said, I have heard this crap from everybody. He was very skeptical. I said, well, teach me everything you can teach me and I will try to show you. He spent many, many hours going over all the things that you guys do legislatively, everything you have to confront as individuals, teaching me what a veteran has to deal with and how much we owe to them.

Bobby, you taught me everything I know. I hope I justified your confidence in me. I told him I was going to get on the committee. I did. But he held my feet to the fire. He didn't just say, okay, now you are a Congressman and whatever you do is okay. He would call me up and say, no, you screwed up here, you screwed up there; do this, do that. He was always right. He was always right for his veterans, the people, the men and women that he loves and he works for every day.

A lot of stuff that I was able to do came about because of Bobby Price's suggestions or his, I should say, demands. He said we got to do this. We got to do that. We can't have this offset. We have got to fix this hole. We have to do this. I listened to every word, most of which we tried to enact.

But Bobby, your friendship really personifies why we think so much of the VFW, because you have people come in and, like Bobby Price, who work at it every single minute of their lives. His wife doesn't like so much his spending

every minute on those veterans.

But, Bobby, as you go through this newest and toughest battle, we love you. We appreciate everything you have done. You have worked so hard every single day, and we love you. Thank you so much, Bobby Price.

The Chairman. I know many of my colleagues have always wondered who taught Filner everything he knows. Bobby, Bobby, Bobby.

Sir, you are in our thoughts. You are in our prayers. You, sir, are not alone. Godspeed.

Senator Burr.

Senator Burr. Thank you, Chairman Miller, Chairman Murray, Ranking Member Filner.

Bobby, let me just say, you took on a big undertaking when you committed to educate him. But you did a good job relative to veterans' issues and, more importantly, the obligations that our country has to our country's veterans.

I want to welcome all the VFW members. I want to thank you for being here. I want to thank you for traveling here today. I want to thank you for your advocacy and the work you do for veterans, because it makes a difference in their lives. More importantly, I want to thank you for your service to this country.

Also, I want to extend a special welcome to those from North Carolina. We maybe didn't travel as far as Senator

Murray's constituents from Washington, but, rest assured, we have got our share of veterans in North Carolina and we accept them with pride and great gratitude for their service to their country.

Commander Eubank, let me welcome you and, more importantly, your leadership here today. Your lifelong commitment to veterans is evidenced by your selection as the national commander. I appreciate your participation in this important annual hearing. Today we will hear your thoughts on how we can improve the lives of veterans, their families and their survivors. Thank you for being here.

Hearing from the VFW provides this committee an opportunity to gain perspective from a distinct group of men and women. Your members have always been on foreign soil, and many have seen combat. Many have experienced the burden of being separated from family and friends for extended periods of time and often under the most difficult of circumstances. Your insight is critical in ensuring that we are providing our veterans with the care and the services they need and, more importantly, deserve. That must be our priority for generations of veterans.

But moving forward, I think it is also important that we recognize the fiscal challenges that our Nation is facing over the coming months and years. We will be relying on you and other veterans service organizations to provide us with

your assessments of our veterans programs so that we can make sure taxpayer money is being spent wisely and effectively.

I am particularly interested in whether the appropriate care and benefits are actually reaching the men and women and their families in the communities they live in.

Commander, in your written testimony you make an interesting comparison regarding VA providing world class health care to millions of veterans while the VBA has not evolved to that standard. This continues to be a concern for me as well as the other members, as you have heard.

We must find a better, quicker way for our veterans to receive their benefits they have earned through their brave service in the Armed Forces. That is why last week I introduced a bill that will allow veterans to receive benefits up to 1 year prior to the date they file fully developed claims for disability compensation. I am going to work with the VFW that we have a definition of "fully developed" that doesn't allow the VA to move the bar and to set a standard that we didn't think was needed.

I would like to quickly just underscore what my colleagues have said about the Caregiver Program. What the VA has done is unconscionable. Many Members of Congress, with input from you here and others around the country, put a great deal of time and effort into making sure that the

caregiver bill was written correctly, covered a very specific population, and enabled individuals that struggled trying to make decisions as to whether they cared for family members and the result of that meant they had to quit their job and lose their insurance and give away a piece of security.

When the President signed that bill into law, all those people recognized the fact that the country and the Congress does listen and they do respond to the personal needs of individuals who have sacrificed more than their share. As a matter of fact, the military couple from North Carolina that the President had at the signing of the caregiver bill today might not be included under the way the VA committee has written this. The one couple that the President pointed to and said, when I sign this, this is why we are doing it, under the way it is written, may not be included.

To me, that is unconscionable. Once again, I say to the Secretary, pull this bill back. Change it. Don't implement it like it is and tell us you are going to change it in the future. The VA does not have the creditworthiness with veterans to feel confident that they will get it right. Do what Congress wrote and get it right from the start.

Now, it is regrettable, and I can assure you that we will continue to push VA to follow through on its responsibilities to severely wounded veterans and their

families with this program.

Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you for your willingness to convene this hearing. Once again, I want to thank all of the VFW members that have come from all over the country to be here and share with us through your Commander your thoughts, your wishes, and we look forward over the next calendar year at working with you very closely.

God bless.

The Chairman. Thank you very much, Senator.

I would now like to yield to Bob Wallace, the Executive Director of the VFW, to introduce the panel here today.

Mr. Wallace. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, members of the Senate and House Veterans' Affairs Committees, I am honored to have the privilege of introducing the national officers of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and our Ladies Auxiliary.

Mr. Chairman, please allow me ask those who are introduced to please remain standing. I wish to request the audience to hold its applause until we have all been introduced:

The National Senior Vice President of our Ladies Auxiliary, Gwen Rankin from California; the National Auxiliary Secretary-Treasurer, Jan Tittle from South Carolina; the Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief's wife, Teresa Denoyer from Massachusetts; the Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief's companion, Deanna Mason from Florida;

the Adjutant General's wife, Becky Kent from Arizona; the Quartermaster General's wife, Judy Maher from Missouri.

The national officers of the VFW: Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, Richard Denoyer from Massachusetts; the Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, John Hamilton from Florida; the Adjutant General, Allen "Gunner" Kent from Arizona; the Quartermaster General, Larry Maher from Missouri; the Judge Advocate General, Larry Minton from Louisiana; the Surgeon General, William Schmitz from New York; the National Chaplain, Elmer Liimatt from Michigan; the National Chief of Staff, David Norris from California; the Inspector General, Darrell Bencken from Kansas; the Chairman of the VFW National Legislative Committee, Warren Tellgren from Colorado; the Director of the VFW National Legislative Service, Raymond Kelley from Maryland; and the Director of the VFW National Veterans Service, William Bradshaw from Maryland.

I would also like to recognize the presence of the VFW Women's Veterans Committee and the VFW Iraq and Afghanistan Committee, and also the many past commanders-in-chief that are here with us all.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman. I now yield to Mr. DeFazio of Oregon to introduce the commander.

Mr. DeFazio, you are recognized.

Mr. DeFazio. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for convening this hearing and for the work of all the members of panel to get our veterans the benefits that they have earned and deserve.

It is my great honor to introduce the commander-in-chief. Commander Eubank had a 20-year career in the Marines, left at the rank of master sergeant to undertake some private endeavors as a successful construction business in California. His younger brother was a Marine. His twin sons were Marines, and other members of his family were Marines, extended family. So he has a tremendous tradition of service to our country, which he has continued since he retired from the Marines.

In 1988, he joined the VFW in California and a mere decade later was the State Commander in California.

Now, I did ask him, and we won't go into all the details, how we have the honor of his living in Oregon, but shall we say that he gave his heart and soul to his country, but then he found someone else to give his heart to who resides in Oregon, and I am so pleased that he makes his home now in Eugene, Oregon, when he gets home, which isn't very often, as I understand it, with his schedule.

Last year he took a team to Vietnam to an excavation site, at which he found and recovered some remains, which is obviously of tremendous solace to the families involved, and

he intends to return again this April with 14 Purple Heart veterans on a special tour of Vietnam.

His battle cry is "get muddy and bloody with the chief." I just want to comment on that for a minute. It would be the perfect world where our veterans got everything they have earned and they deserved easily with the Veterans Administration that acted as their advocates. Unfortunately, that perfect world does not exist and many times veterans have to fight for the benefits they have earned and they deserve.

I would like to put in a plug here for a small bill I had in the last Congress, if I could, Mr. Chairman. In my 24 years in Congress, every year except this year I have had one to three VA work studies, that is veterans who are eligible for GI benefits working in my office helping veterans get the benefits they deserve working with my staff. I have two staff members who devote virtually full-time to wrestling with the VA to assist veterans. One is the Wounded Warrior Program; one is my regular staff. But we have always had the help of the VA work studies.

Some bureaucrat in the VA decided that this is not a legitimate use of a work study.

Now, I have thought I could get it corrected administratively. We can't. They are stone-walling us. I would hope that this committee acts to restore that program.

It is a fabulous benefit, both for these veterans, many of whom go on after getting their college degrees to more advocacy for veterans, become service officers and do other things, and it is obviously a tremendous help to my veterans because my two full-time staff can't keep up with the load.

Now, I know I have an ally here in this fight, and I am hopeful that the committee will act on that legislation this year, because we need more people out there helping our veterans get what they have earned and they deserve, like the Commander and all the members of VFW, until that perfect day when the VA delivers everything easily to all our veterans.

With that, it is my great honor to introduce the commander-in-chief, Richard Eubank.

Commander.

STATEMENT OF RICHARD L. EUBANK, COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF,  
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES,  
ACCOMPANIED BY WILLIAM BRADSHAW, DIRECTOR, NATIONAL  
VETERANS SERVICE; ROBERT E. WALLACE, EXECUTIVE  
DIRECTOR; RAYMOND C. KELLEY, DIRECTOR, NATIONAL  
LEGISLATIVE SERVICE; WARREN TELLGREN, CHAIRMAN,  
NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

Mr. Eubank. Thank you so much, Honorable DeFazio. Thank you so much for the kind introduction and I do promise to stand beside you on any battle you want to go into for veterans.

Madam and Mr. Chairman, thank you for this opportunity to present the Veterans of Foreign Wars' national priorities before your Veterans' Affairs Committee, and congratulations on your respective chairmanships. We look forward to working with you and your staff in the 112th Congress.

Before I begin, I would like to take a moment to recognize the service of two great veterans advocates: Senator Akaka, 30-plus years in Congress fighting for your fellow veterans has truly made him a statesman. And he is not just a member of the Greatest Generation; he is a shining example of what that term means.

I would also like to take a moment to recognize fellow

Marine Senator Jim Webb, who said he ran for Congress to help make a difference.

Senator, thank you for being a man of your word, and we look forward to working with you both and your staffs for the remainder of the 112th Congress.

To both of you, I offer my thanks and gratitude on behalf of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and all of America's veterans for your tireless effort and unique contributions.

As Congress begins to rein in spending to reduce the Federal deficit, please don't forget the men and women who are defending our country and their families at home. We only ask that you do what is right for America's only true heroes.

The VA is a 21st century health care system that delivers world-class care to America's veterans. The Veterans Benefits Administration, however, continues to struggle with its greatest workload in over 50 years and its worst quality in decades.

Currently, the number of veterans awaiting claims decisions totaled nearly 1.5 million, an increase of nearly 40 percent in just 1 year. The seeds of today's processing problems were sewn decades and stem from several problems. Inadequate staffing through the 1980s and 1990s directly impacted production. Late budgets forced managers to choose quantity over quality, which helped attribute to the error

rates that the VA admits are 17 percent. Within some regional offices, they can exceed one in three. Missed opportunities to streamline and automate processes by adopting new technology also compounded the problem. And political leadership inside the VA and OMB during the administrations of both parties decided not to address the IT or staffing requirements within the Veterans Benefits Administration.

The VFW is working with the VBA at many different levels to reach greater efficiency and rating quality. Our goal is to help them improve their claims processing without harming veterans and to achieve a win-win solution for everyone. We have monitored recent VA initiatives over the past 18 months and provided crucial assessments where warranted and public encouragement when necessary. We have also collaborated with the VA and others in an unprecedented way to ensure that these initiatives effectively and efficiently address the needs of veterans and their loved ones.

The Veterans Health Administration anticipates 8.5 million veterans in their system this year, with more than 6 million of them receiving some type of individual care. That number has doubled over the last decade and will continue to rise.

According to recent VA statistics, more than 625,000

Iraq and Afghanistan veterans have sought VA care out of a pool of around 1.25 million. The number of women serving in uniform far exceeds any previous conflict, and they serve in roles that increasingly expose them to the risk of combat injuries and death. Approximately 214,000 women serve in the military today, with more entering every year. The VA estimates that more than 40 percent have already enrolled for health care. They expect that number to nearly double in the next 20 years.

The VA must provide more gender-specific primary care for services at all medical facilities. The VA must take the lead on researching the effects of war on women, which includes PTSD and military sexual trauma.

More than 42,000 service members have been wounded in action over the last decade, but that number does not include those suffering from invisible psychological wounds. Veterans who suffer from traumatic brain injury and other cognitive impairments are often in difficult situations, since the effects can be both severe and not immediately obvious.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars believes that creating a baseline to measure the effects of IED explosions and other concussive events will help to identify and treat those with such injuries.

The VFW also firmly believes that Congress must

continue to provide necessary funding to ensure that those who seek help receive the best care available, and we urge the Defense Department and the VA to increase their efforts to help to destigmatize mental health counseling. We are very encouraged by military leaders who continue to speak out from personal experience that it is okay to seek mental health assistance. Recent VA data shows that more than half of all Iraq and Afghanistan patients treated have experienced some sort of mental trauma and about one-fourth of them have been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder.

Military veterans' suicides are taking a tremendous toll and is perhaps the most serious challenge DOD and the VA face. Unfortunately, the tide has turned for the worst in recent years, with an average of 18 veterans committing suicide every day. This nationwide problem is especially prevalent in the National Guard and Reserves, whose members usually do not have access to the same on-base support agencies that active duty military and their families receive. The Veterans of Foreign Wars believes that DOD and the VA must do more to combat this threat to include initiating one-on-one mental health evaluations before and after each deployment.

Knowing that a veteran's family is also a great source of comfort and support, the Veterans of Foreign Wars greatly

appreciates the work of both committees to pass a new law that is more commonly called the caregiver bill. The VFW is supportive of the interim final rule the VA submitted last week to speed the rulemaking process, but we recognize that there is still work to be done.

We strongly believe that any rules, interim or final, must be created so that caregivers from all generations can also benefit from this very positive piece of legislation. We ask that your committee provide the continued oversight this crucial program requires. We also insist that the VA move as quickly as possible to provide the care and services dictated by the law.

National unemployment rates continue to be unacceptably high, but veterans have been especially hit hard at 15 percent just last month. We must all do better to educate corporate America about the skills and can-do attitudes of all veterans that they can bring to a workplace, plus we ask for your support to better enforce the USERRA laws and the government's 3 percent set-aside for Federal contracts.

I have other issues, and they are listed in my written statement, but in the interest of brevity, I will now conclude by thanking each and every one of you for the opportunity to present the Veterans of Foreign Wars' national legislative priorities.

I would be happy to answer any questions that you or

the members of your committees may have.

Thank you.

[The statement of Richard L. Eubank appears on p. ]

\*\*\*\*\* INSERT 1-1 \*\*\*\*\*

The Chairman. Thank you very much for your timely comments, Commander. We appreciate that, and your written comments will be entered into the record.

You talked in your testimony about the large variance in terms of performance between VA regional offices, and I couldn't agree more. I think we have all been confronted with that issue over time. What do you think we can do as Members of Congress to solve that problem of variances between the different regional offices?

Mr. Bradshaw. Sir, I think one of the things that the commander-in-chief talked about is the oversight that you do already, but we are convinced that the information technology systems is really the answer. There is always going to have to be some human quality control at the end, but with the number of claims they have now, if some of it cannot be done through IT means, it is going to be hard to catch up.

Quality control I think comes in when you are pressured to do many cases fast, and therefore, you go for quantity and not quality. We think that if they get a good computer system, that can be corrected.

The Chairman. Speaking of IT, the VA rating schedule and compensation claims have grown very complex, as you all know, over the last several years, and some have suggested

that really it is the complexity that is responsible for the backlog of claims and that maybe the VA should replace its existing schedule with a much more simplified version.

I am interested in knowing if you agree with a simplified version, some have even gone so far as to say four levels of disability ratings. But does the VFW have a view in what we can do to help simplify the process? Money has been put at it. Bodies have been put at it. The backlog remains out there. Everybody up here is committed to finding a way to solve it, and I think, with your help, we can do it. But I am interested in knowing, is the complexity the problem? Is it training?

What do you think, Commander?

Mr. Wallace?

Mr. Wallace. I think, Mr. Chairman, that the issue is years of neglect. The emphasis of this committee, the Senate committee, the administrations from the mid-1990s was to transform the VA health care system. All emphasis went there. Money went there. Resources went there, the most sophisticated automated medical record in the whole country. Presidents of both parties have touted the VA as leading the medical industry. And at the same time, attention wasn't paid to VBA.

Technology is lacking. You have now given, the administration and the Congress have given robust budgets

for information technology to automate the systems, and we are starting to see that work with the Agent Orange claims that they are doing. We are starting to see it work with the education claims that they are doing.

We, the VFW, have an unprecedented relationship with VBA. The rating schedules, we are sitting at the table. We are talking about that with them, giving our input. We are also involved in every pilot they have, whether it be our local people or people here from Washington. Other organizations are also doing the same.

We are trying to make the system better so they understand from our standpoint representing veterans what they need to do. It is not going to happen overnight. It is just not going to happen overnight.

Our biggest concern is a quick fix, something that seems like it will be a great thing to get rid of the backlog. I know you get complaints from your constituents, and every other Member does; why is my claim taking so long? We get the same complaints. But we don't want a fix that is going to harm veterans.

You talk about rewriting the regulations. One of the issues is functionality. In today's environment, if you get prosthetic devices, you can jog; you are able to climb hills and so forth. If I don't want to use those, should I get compensated more than someone who uses those?

Functionality. So we don't want to see functionality harm veterans. This system was put in place for the average veteran.

There is a lot of intricate parts to the system that we think we bring to the table, and that is why we are working very hard with VA, and we want to continue to work with the committees so that we do the right thing, realizing it is going to take time, but we don't do something that will be to the detriment of any veteran in this country.

The Chairman. Thank you.

Mr. Filner.

Mr. Filner. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Commander. Thank you for your staff and your membership around the country.

I just want to first thank you, the VFW and other organizations, who took on the last couple years as your chief legislative goal the so-called forward or advanced funding. That is, fund the VA health care a year in advance so it would not be subject to all the budget politics that goes on in Washington. And now that we don't have a budget right now and we are negotiating every couple weeks for a new budget, it shows how important that battle was.

We passed forward funding, and today, even though there is no budget for the United States -- there is a continuing resolution -- the VA health care system has been funded and

people don't have to wait for people to be hired or equipment to be bought. So I think this Congress responded to your priorities. We have forward funding, and health care for veterans is maintained, even during this real difficult political period. We thank you for that, Commander, and your members.

I would like you to react, Mr. Wallace was rightfully worried about quick fixes, but, you know, the backlog keeps going up. We find, I don't know, 10,000 new people, and it is still going up and going up.

Let me just ask your members, how many here are Vietnam vets? Virtually everybody. I need to say, first of all, thank you. That is a couple of words. But this country did not serve you well when you returned home. Those of us who opposed the war, and I was one of them, did not differentiate between the war and the warrior.

This is a democracy. We can differ over the war. But we should never differ over the heroism of those who either were drafted or volunteered to fight it. We did not make that differentiation as a society. We did not treat you well, and we are paying a heavy price today, and you are paying a heavy price, you and your comrades.

I mean, in many cities, half of the homeless on the street are Vietnam vets. The suicide rate, as you know, is incredible. There have been more suicides by Vietnam vets

than died in the original war. I mean, that is a horrendous stain on our Nation, the way that we treated you.

There have been various efforts to say, thank you, welcome home. I think one of the best ways to really say welcome home and bring some peace to hundreds of thousands of your comrades and deal with the backlog that we have been talking about, there are several hundred thousand, maybe more, of Agent Orange claims in the backlog.

For decades, we never even said there was any problem. Then we said, well, maybe it is a small problem. Well, if your boots weren't on the ground, you are not even eligible, and the bureaucratic hurdles are so high that people probably get sicker fighting the VA than they were ever from the illness of Agent Orange.

So I say let's bring all that together. Let's really say thank you to our Vietnam vets. Let's give you and your comrades some peace. Let's have you stop fighting the VA and let's get rid of a quarter million or so people off the backlog and recognize the Agent Orange claims. Just say thank you. That is the best way for me that I can say thank you to our veterans.

And I am talking not about just those who had boots on the grounds. If you were in the blue waters off Vietnam, if you were in the blue skies above, if you were in the trans-shipment points where this stuff opened up, if you

were in Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, I want to expand that eligibility to the whole potential theater there.

So I hope you don't classify this, Mr. Wallace, as a quick fix. This is something that people have been fighting for 30 and 40 years. It is time to really say, welcome home, thank you. Let's get those Agent Orange claims off our books.

Mr. Commander, do you have any comment on that? Again, we thank all of you. We really want to say, welcome home.

Mr. Wallace. Mr. Filner, I am one of those that you say welcome home to, more than once. But I also believe in the integrity of the system. I also believe that Secretary Shinseki should be a hero to every Vietnam veteran because he did the right thing, not the political thing, when he just added three presumptive illnesses and increased the backlog by 200,000 claims. He is taking care of his fellow Vietnam veterans.

I don't know how you would just say "welcome home" and write a check. You would have to go through the medical evidence and so forth to see the degree of the disability with someone. It seems simple. It sounds simple, but I think there is a lot more to it that we all have to realize.

Mr. Filner. My time is up.

Bob, you know how much I love you, but you are beginning to sound like the VA bureaucrats. There are all

kinds of complications in everything. There are all kinds of details. We have people in this system for decades. We know they are suffering. I mean, yeah, those three presumptives were great, but about there are others, and our anecdotal evidence is far more powerful I think than this you need 20 years of scientific stuff.

I was in Illinois once and I got handed a list of 500 Vietnam vets who had Parkinson's at about age 50 or 51, about 10 years before you should get it. That is scientific evidence to me. And it took threats of legislation, it took decades. They finally made it, I think, presumptive. But we knew it was. We knew what caused it. And every one of those veterans who filed a claim, and I am not saying, just come down, file your claims, we will give you a check. No, there have been claims on the books; the medical evidence is there. The eligibility, we have legislated it out, and we should end that change and say, look, even if it takes minimal recognition at this point, cut through the damn bureaucracy, cut through the red tape, cut through these technicalities and complications. I want to say, let's give some peace to these folks and welcome home.

Mr. Wallace. What we have suggested to the VA and they are starting to work on is partial claim. Grant partial claim. If you have the medical evidence for diabetes from your private physician, give it to them, give them some kind

of relief and some kind of money. We are working on them to do that. But I would love to have that conversation further with you.

Mr. Filner. Thank you, Mr. Wallace.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman. Mr. Flores.

Mr. Flores. Thank you, Chairman Miller, Ranking Member Filner, Chairman Murray and Ranking Member Burr. I appreciate all of you for holding this hearing today for the Veterans of Foreign Wars legislative agenda.

Thank you Commander-in-Chief Eubank and your fellow witnesses here today for traveling to be with us. I am grateful for your service and for your continued voice for our Veterans of Foreign Wars around the country.

I am here to listen and learn. I have no questions at this time. I do have a couple of comments though. I would like to extend my personal thanks and sincere appreciation for our veterans for their service and sacrifice for our country.

I also would like to recognize Jim Hoffman from Texas, along with our other service men and women from Texas. Thank you for traveling here to attend this hearing today.

Ensuring that our veterans are properly cared for and honored is of great importance to me and to everyone in this room. We are forever indebted to them for fighting for our

country so we can enjoy the freedoms that we have today.

So, thank you, and I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman. Thank you.

Mr. Michaud.

Mr. Michaud. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

National Commander and Auxiliary, I want to thank you and all of your members for coming here today, and thank you also for your input into the independent budget. That definitely has been an extremely important document that this committee looks at every year. So I really appreciate that as well.

Chairman Miller mentioned about and thanked the VFW members from the white sand beaches of Florida for coming here. I want to thank the members from the white snow-covered grounds of Maine for coming down as well. I guess we got about a foot-and-a-half of snow in northern Maine, and it is all white. So I would like to thank them as well.

Senator Murray had mentioned about the VFW members in her State really advocating for veterans. I want to let you know, Mr. Commander, that no matter where they are located, whether it is in Washington, Maine, Florida, I can tell you that the VFW members that I have talked to are very vocal about what we do here in Congress, and it is because of leadership, such as yourself and your leadership team, that

they are very focused and they do have the talking points as they meet with individual Members of Congress. So I want to thank you for that education and your willingness to actually help VSOs all around the country understand what is going on here in Washington.

I have a couple of questions. My first actually gets into some of the issues that I have with the VA and how they implement legislation.

As you know, back in actually 2006, Congress passed legislation that stated that the VA will pay for full cost of nursing home care. As Senator Burr mentioned, he is defining "fully developed" in his legislation.

Unfortunately, when the VA decided what full cost meant, they narrowed that down. Then, in the regulations, they also stated that once you received payment from the VA, that is payment in full. So the cost that the VA did not say that was covered and they could collect funds from Medicare or Medicaid, they no longer can if they accept payment from the VA. So, ultimately, what happens, there are nursing homes that are not taking some 70 percent of veterans or higher because of the low reimbursement rate.

Likewise, a Congressman on the Veterans' Affairs Committee passed a pilot program for five regions to set up a pilot program in five different VISNs to look at delivering care to veterans in rural areas. Likewise, the

VA, when they decided to implement that legislation, it was supposed to be VISN-wide; they choose very narrow regions within those VISNs. Here again, under the caregivers legislation, once again, the VA is not implementing the legislation that was intended by Congress.

My question being, is the fact that the VA has a long history of not complying with the congressional intent, what would you recommend that this committee do to make sure that the VA complies with the law? That is my first question.

My second question actually deals with the backlog within the VA system. I understand what Mr. Wallace is saying. However, I think if you look in the private sector, UNM, for instance, in Maine, for instance, they deal with a lot of disability claims in Maine, and they do it very efficiently, effectively, and in a timely manner. Even though I am not supportive of contracting services out in general, would you support contracting the disability claims section out until we can actually move forward with the backlog and get it under control?

Those are my two questions.

RPTS MCKENZIE

DCMN SECKMAN

[10:35 a.m.]

Mr. Eubank. Mr. Chairman, I would like to have, again, the experts in those fields respond to that, and I would like to give that to Bob.

Mr. Wallace. Let me answer your last question first. On contracting, if the VA needed to get someone in because they don't have the expertise to make something happen, They should get them in. We saw the fiasco that happened when they didn't do it with the GI Bill, the original GI Bill. They didn't have the expertise in-house. They should have went out and gotten somebody to put that system into place. They didn't do it, and a lot of veterans suffered for that. So if it is doing something that is going to help the process, they should be working with every available corporate entity to make that happen.

Why they don't comply with the regulations and the intent of Congress, I don't know. But should they restrict the rural health to one facility in each VISN? No. I don't think that was the intention of Congress or Veterans Service Organizations. Rural health is a serious problem in this country, especially with veterans in the National Guard and the Reserves. They should be testing it in the entire VISN,

not just in one facility in a VISN.

The nursing home issue, quality of life is second to none in a State veterans home. Quality of life is what we are all about for America's veterans and their families. That is why they should be doing everything they possibly can to abide by the law. And we urge you to use your oversight authorities to enforce them and make them do it. We want America's veterans taken care of with dignity, compassion, and understanding. And we thank you for all you are doing to make that happen.

Mr. Michaud. Thank you.

The Chairman. Ms. Buerkle.

Ms. Buerkle. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you to all of the members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and your Auxiliaries for being here this morning and your willingness to testify to us and for your service to our country. We are truly grateful.

With your dedication to the well-being of the servicemembers and veterans who sacrifice for our Nation, it is truly deeply humbling and greatly appreciated. I am honored to have the opportunity to meet with you today.

I would like to express a particularly extreme warm welcome to those here from New York. Those here from New York, anybody? It is nice to see the sunshine down here. There they are. Thank you for all that you do, and I am

proud to be your Representative on this committee.

I am proud to serve as chairwoman of the Health Subcommittee on the Veterans' Affairs Committee. I take this position very seriously, and I look forward to working closely with Ranking Member Mike Michaud and my other colleagues on this committee to ensure that American veterans receive what they richly deserve, the best care anywhere. Your input here this morning is extremely valuable and timely, as the annual process to develop the budget for veterans' programs for fiscal year 2012 and 2013 has just begun.

Providing quality medical care to America's veterans is a top priority of mine, and I will work with Veterans Service Organizations and my colleagues in both bodies and on both sides of the aisle to ensure that this is a priority of this Congress.

Commander Eubank, thank you for your testimony this morning. I look forward to working with you and your esteemed membership as we move forward in our mutual work to improve the lives of our veterans. Thank you all very much.

Mr. Eubank. And we thank you.

Ms. Buerkle. I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman. Mr. Barrow.

Mr. Barrow. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We have heard about the white sand of Florida and the

white snow of Maine. Have we got anybody here from the red clay country of Georgia? Anybody from south of the gnat line? Well, y'all are mighty precious to me here, but more importantly, you are precious to the folks back home. Thank you for being here.

Commander Eubank, thank you and all of your colleagues for what you do. If any one of us wasn't up here, there would be somebody taking our place. And you can look that up.

But the same can't be said for any of y'all. If y'all weren't here, there would be nobody taking your place. So by my lights, what y'all are doing is a whole lot more important than what we are doing. So I want to thank each and every one of y'all for caring enough to get involved. Every one of you gave the best years of your life in service for our country. But after that period of service, you continue to give back to all of the folks that you represent. And you represent hundreds of people who don't get involved, who don't join up, but nonetheless are beneficiaries of the hard work that you do.

Commander Eubank, I want to turn to the subject that we have talked some about and that is the disability determination process we have got. To my way of thinking, it is highly dysfunctional. I think in the days in which it started out, it made a lot of sense to let one person wear a

lot of hats, to let a bean counter be both the medical examiner, the lawyer, the judge and jury to kind of streamline the process to have functions we typically break down into different parts and give it all to one person to try and get straight to the heart of the matter. But with the proliferation of medical complexity, medical records, the complexity of medical diagnoses, the issues we have to decide, I think the process that may have worked really well for the veterans coming out of World War II ain't working so well today. And a real illustration of this might be had from looking at two unlikely areas of comparison. Look at the IRS, for example.

Compared to the speed and dispatch with which our disability system makes determinations on a case-by-case basis, the IRS is a model of efficiency. It works on the honor system. The presumption is that the information that you tender is correct. That presumption is enforced with very, very severe consequences of folks who knowingly lie and submit tax returns under penalty of perjury. And as a result, the Federal Government raises a whole bunch of money without doing an audit of every single case.

If the government had to raise its funds through the IRS the same way that the VA decides to dispense benefits to the VBA, the government would grind to a halt because we couldn't raise the revenues to run the government. So, in

terms of the efficiency with which the government raises money, it compares very favorably to the rate and the method it uses to dispense benefits.

Take another unlikely source of comparison. We have very, very complex and difficult issues we decide today in our society at the end of life. And we have regulated and streamlined the hell out of that process in order to deal with some of the most difficult decisions that families have to make in the most complex of circumstances. In every State in the Union, we have regulated the process by which doctors make the very difficult determination and the very complex determination that someone is no longer living, that the body may be functioning, but the spirit has fled from the sepulcher.

And we have streamlined this process in a way that our society has come to terms with, and it is done in a way that vests the medical responsibility and the care of doctors. And if we can figure out a way in which we can give doctors the awesome power to take people off life support, we ought to give doctors the equally valuable benefit of turning on life support.

We have right now a process where you have to adjudicate every claim before someone is entitled to any benefits, before the life support is turned on. If we could streamline that process, if we could reverse the presumption

in favor of the truth, of the veracity of the person applying for benefits, and allow them to go to the head of the line if they can get a determination signed in writing and under oath by a medical doctor that, based on my examination of the patient and the history that has been given to me, it is my determination that so and so has got a disability of a certain rating and, therefore, that determination is made in the favor by the doctor, then why can't we turn on the benefits with the same kind of dispatch that we, as a society, are able to turn off the life support? Can you envision a process where we can move to something like that?

I know that they are trying to streamline this process on a case-by-case basis and diagnosis, a classification basis. But I envision a process where we can go much further than that with much greater dispatch. Leave the current bureaucracy in place but create a shortcut for folks who can produce medical testimony in a streamlined fashion, that based on the professional opinion of the doctor, this person has got a disability of a certain rating that is based on their service or not. Can you envision a day when we can move to something as efficient as that?

Mr. Eubank. I would like to provide this comment, that I do know that on things that we are doing today and technology that is being used today, when a soldier gets out

of the service or there was a problem in the service that required some type of medical attention, that that is now just one Social Security Number away from providing that full technology. And if we could focus on -- it don't take but one person to run that part of the technology to find out if there is a need for some type of health care.

But we also need at the same time -- that is not available from World War II and Korea and the Vietnam era and, in some cases, Desert Storm. And that is where our backlog is starting to focus. So I think what the attention should be paid to is, it only takes that one person to find out if that person needs care, but we might need to take four or five -- and I say that as a whole -- people to make sure that this person's health care, does he or she definitely have a claim against the VA? And I think that that would also start to shorten the backlog of people trying to get their compensation.

Mr. Barrow. Well, I certainly want to preserve the existing system for those who choose to avail themselves of it, and solution, the idea that I am offering is certainly no panacea, that many veterans cannot produce medical testimony in support of their claims, and none should have to do so. But my point is, for those who can and are able to do so, we ought to be able to send those folks straight to the head of the line and to turn the benefits right on

and preserve and use this cumbersome, overly bureaucratic system, as we must, for those folks who have no alternative.

But for those who have the medical evidence, the medical testimony, if you have got a man or a woman who has got an MD after their name and a license to practice medicine literally putting their reputation, their license and their profession on the line every time they sign a prescription form or every time they cut on a patient, stating under oath in their medical opinion that someone suffers from a certain degree of disability, and based on what they have been told and what they can see in the treatment of the patient is their opinion that it relates to their service, that ought to be enough.

Mr. Eubank. I agree with that. And I do also agree that the fact is, our problem and our concern is that not all people are having the same common sense as you.

Mr. Barrow. Well, this is Congress, and common sense is sometimes in short supply up here. But if you attend as many veterans town hall meetings as I conduct, you hear this story over and over and over again, and you are looking for a way to get through the process to try to create shortcuts. Because I have been proud to support the devotion of huge new commitments of resources to the existing system. But feeding more people into the existing system is a lot like shovelling fleas across the barnyard. Nothing much seems to

get to the other side.

What we need is to figure out ways of preserving this system for where it makes the most sense when folks have no other place to go, but for folks who have the support to be able to go straight to the head of the line on a basis much like the way the Federal Government raises its funds.

Mr. Chairman, I have trespassed on the other members' time and I thank you. I yield back.

The Chairman. Mr. Johnson.

Mr. Johnson. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Commander-in-Chief Eubank, I would like to thank you and your panel also for testifying before us today and providing your insights and recommendations for areas where the VA can and should be improved. I share your sentiment that our Nation's veterans deserve our sincere gratitude and assistance, and we have a responsibility to provide them with the high quality health care benefits and services that they have earned.

I would also like to take just a brief moment and thank the VFW members who have come here from Ohio.

Could we get you to raise your hands back there?

I know there is quite a few of you. Thank you very much. I thank you for your service. Thank you for making this trip to represent our great State.

Commander-in-Chief Eubank, in your written testimony,

you stated that the VFW is working with the Veterans Benefits Administration to help them find solutions to achieve greater efficiencies and quality in processing claims. I share your concerns for the claims processing backlog, and I am interested to learn more details of your work with the VBA in this area. In your opinion, what is the most important thing that we can do here in Congress to assist the VA in this process?

Mr. Kelley. Oversight. Oversight of the pilots that are in place that we have gone and reviewed. We have got -- I think there is nearly 50 pilots to determine the best way to move forward with the claims backlog. We have not done a whole lot to examine how they interface with each other. There might be a great pilot in Arkansas and another great one in Ohio, but we haven't seen how those two could work together to improve even more or if they won't work together. So we need to continue to push forward, find the pilots that are working, start working pilots together and find solutions.

Mr. Johnson. You just mentioned oversight.

And Commander-in-Chief Eubank, in your testimony, you have recommend that this committee in its oversight authority ensure a robust and successful transition to a VA that deftly uses cutting-edge IT solutions to better support our veterans. I assure you that, as the chairman of the

Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee and as a veteran myself with a background in information technology from the business community, that I take this issue very, very seriously.

We are already planning our strategy to work with the VA on the information-technology issues. It seems like every hearing that I have been to, that has been a central theme, and we are going to focus on that. Do you have any specific ideas or issues regarding IT, where we should focus our priorities in that oversight responsibility?

Mr. Eubank. Under IT, I am a fixed bayonet Marine on the end of the rifle. So there is somebody that knows more about IT than I do.

Mr. Wallace. What I would like to do is get back with the staff and talk about it and get back to you with any suggestions that we have. But thank you for the opportunity to give you some input.

Mr. Johnson. That would be wonderful.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

The Chairman. Thank you very much.

Are there any other questions?

Mr. Filner.

Mr. Filner. If I may just have a minute, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Mr. Commander.

I am frustrated -- and I am sure your members are --

but everybody we hear is focusing on process. Even the oversight answer that you gave was, it is a process, it is a process. And people are dying waiting to get their disability claims. I mean, that is a process. We need to get some results quick. You know, everybody is worried about somebody getting too much money here. So we give somebody -- 98 percent, that is going to be fine. So with 2 percent, somebody gets a \$10 extra check or something. I want to end the suffering for people are doing fighting the damn VA bureaucracy.

Everybody is focused on process, process, process. We will do this pilot and that pilot, and this oversight and that oversight. We know what Agent Orange has done. We know who it has done it to. Let's fix that part and move on. You know, we don't need anymore studies. We don't need any more oversight. People are here for 40 years waiting for some help on this.

Anyway, so, Commander, maybe you have to do some oversight. Your guys are great, but they are all talking like bureaucrats. Let's get some results for the members by saying, you know, if this guy is going to get \$10 more because we didn't do enough, I say, so what. Let's reward the -- let's get all those who have served this Nation and get the job done. Thank you very much.

The Chairman. Ms. Buerkle.

Ms. Buerkle. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just wanted to assure all of you here today, because you have heard many concerns about the new caregivers law, on this Friday, the Health Care Subcommittee will be having a hearing about that very issue, to ensure and to take a look at the implementation of it and any problems with this going forward, just to ensure that we can accomplish the true intent of the law.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I yield back.

The Chairman. Thank you very much.

Commander, again, we appreciate your testimony today.

I would ask unanimous consent that all members would have 5 legislative days to revise and extend and add extraneous material.

Without objection, it will be entered into the record. And without any further comments, this hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 10:53 a.m., the committee was adjourned.]