VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

April—June 2026

1822 W 162nd Street, Gardena, CA 90247
Phone: (310) 324-6161 www.vfw3261.org

It's not the dues you paid to be a member, it's the price you paid to be eligible.

GENERAL WILLIAM STARK ROSECRANS | VFW POST 3261

COMMANDER'S COMMENTS
Jimmy "C" Carradine, Post Commander



July 1, 2026, marks the start of our new fiscal year. Before looking ahead, I want to take a moment to recognize the **VFW Memorial Day Service** held on May 25, 2026. Roosevelt Memorial Park Cemetery, in coordination with Post 3261 and the City of Gardena, honored the heroes who served our country. I would like to acknowledge the members from Post 3261 for their participation in making this a memorable day: Anthony Dixon, Senior Vice Commander, who served as the MC, Auxiliary Members Rosalind Jenkins and Teniska Lennox, and Post Chaplin Corey B. Ruffin.

I want to express special appreciation to Roosevelt Cemetery for hosting this annual event and acknowledge the dedicated coordination and follow-up of their staff including Javier Franandez, Vice President of Cemetery Operations and Jennifer Rebollar, Cemetery Office Manager. **Photos from the event are featured on page 2 and 3 of the Newsletter.**

We are also grateful to Stacy Foxworth for singing the National Anthem and "God Bless America"; the Gardena H.S. Jr. ROTC cadets Arredondo, Rivera, Colocho, and Andrade, along with their instructor, Alex Pitts; the Air Force Honor Guard; and City of Gardena Mayor Tasha Cerda, who was recently reelected by a landslide and City of Gardena staff including Nikki Sweeney, Interim Director of Recreation and Human Services, and Adrianna Renteria, Administrative Coordinator. State Senator Laura Richardson also attended to thank all veterans who have served our country. We also appreciate the support of Cazzie Burns, Community and Government Relations at Inglewood Park Cemetery.

We welcome three new members to Post 3261. Corey B. Ruffin, Sr. (Army/Navy—Desert Shield/Storm), who transferred as a member at large, and Robert "Doc" Biery (Army/Iran), who transferred from Kentucky, have both accepted new responsibilities. Corey was elected Trustee and will also serve as Post Chaplain, while Robert "Doc" will chair the Post Membership and Recruiting Committee. We also recruited Corey L. Preston (Navy—Desert Shield/Storm) in June. Our new members have already begun planning activities, and we look forward to their ideas.

We encourage you to share suggestions that may help improve the Post. A suggestion box is located at the rear entrance to the Canteen, and suggestion forms are available from the Canteen bartender, Post Commander, or other Post officers.

CANTEEN
Open Monday—Sunday
2—10 PM

TACO TUESDAY & KARAOKE
4—10 PM

BINGO WEDNESDAY
Open @ 4:30 PM
Starts @ 6:30 PM

Menu:
Hot Dogs | Hamburgers
Cheese Toast | Patty Melt
Taco Salad | French Fries
Desserts: Brownies & Pineapple Upside Down Cake

RENT THE HALL FOR YOUR NEXT PARTY OR EVENT!

(Capacity: 250 Persons)

Security Deposit is $500
(Required to hold the date)

Friday & Saturday $2,200
(Bar closes at midnight)

Veterans Crisis Line
DIAL 988 then PRESS 1

VFW Post 3261 joined the City of Gardena at Roosevelt Memorial Park & Mortuary to Honor Fallen Service Members

VFW Memorial Day Service

Monday, May 25, 2026

















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VFW Memorial Day Service

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This Is More Than 'Paperwork'

How one veteran found her calling in service.

April 2026

Growing up in foster care as a child, Stefani Stephens didn't have a lot of stability in her life. After a divorce and being the mom of two young children, she was looking for security. Stephens says she had "always felt an affinity for the military," and at age 23, she joined the U.S. Army.

A deployment to Iraq and tours in Korea equipped Stephens for more than just her duties as a movement control specialist.



"These experiences shaped my resilience, discipline and commitment to service," Stephens, 49, said. In fact, those skills and passion are now beneficial for her current role as a VFW Accredited Service Officer. In her daily work, Stephens says, "I advocate for veterans and their families by guiding them through the VA claims and appeals process, ensuring they receive the benefits they have earned."

Before working for the VFW, she spent a year living in Mexico, reflecting on doing work that "truly mattered," she explained. In an unexpected but significant way, this prompted her to approach the opportunity to help veterans. "I walked into the VSO office at the Tucson VA hospital and said, 'I want to work here,'" she said.

After serving as a volunteer for six weeks, she secured an interview and was hired the same day. "Helping veterans gives me a deep sense of purpose," she said. "Everything I have lived — my military service, personal challenges, overseas work and healing work — led naturally to this role. Supporting veterans feels like the work I was always meant to do."

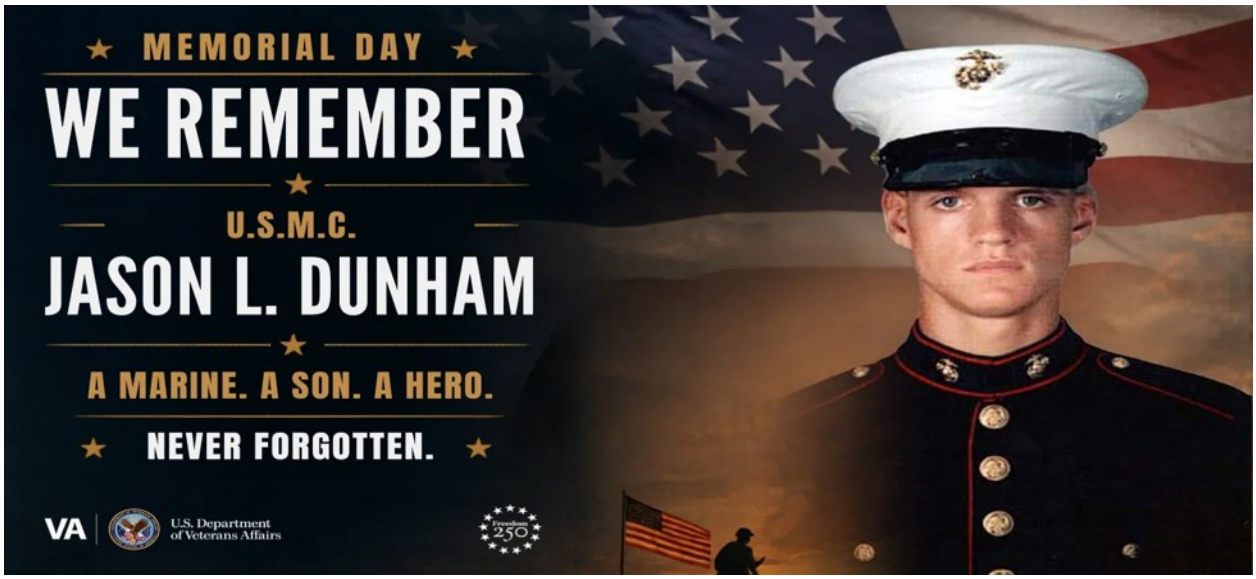
Stephens insisted that while it's ultimately rewarding, her job can also be demanding at times. "The biggest challenge is carrying the emotional weight of the stories veterans share," she said. "Many carry decades of trauma or frustration. Balancing empathy with a high caseload is difficult, but being someone they trust makes it meaningful."

She cites an example of a situation she faced while helping a Vietnam veteran who'd lived with survivor's guilt for many years. "As we built his claim, he began opening up about things he had never spoken aloud," she said. "Watching him find even a small measure of peace — and seeing how being understood can heal — reminded me that this work is far more than paperwork. It is about restoring dignity, humanity and hope."

Learn more about the VFW's National Veterans Service (NVS) program.

Source: https://www.vfw.org/media-and-events/latest-releases/archives/2026/4/this-is-more-than-paperwork

USMC Cpl. Jason Dunham: One second, one decision.



May 2026 Digital Media Engagement

In the spring 2004, the Iraq city of Fallujah was under siege, and the border town of Husaybah became one of the most lethal postings in Iraq. It was here, on a dusty street on April 14, that 22-year-old Cpl. Jason Lee Dunham made a decision that would save his fellow Marines.

Dunham was serving as a squad leader with Kilo Company, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marines. His unit deployed to Husaybah, a town on the Syrian border known for smuggling insurgents and weapons into Iraq.

That morning, his unit responded to a report of an ambush on a Marine convoy. While moving to intercept, Dunham attempted to restrain an Iraqi insurgent who was trying to flee. In the struggle, the man dropped a live grenade onto the road. What happened next took less than a second.

Dunham shouted a warning to the Marines around him, pulled off his helmet, pressed it down over the grenade, and threw himself on top of it. He absorbed nearly the entire explosion as the grenade detonated beneath him. Lance Corporal William Hampton and Lance Corporal Mark Dean were wounded within the blast radius but survived.

Dunham was evacuated immediately to military medical facilities in the region, then flown to Bethesda Naval Hospital in Maryland, where his family rushed to be by his side. He never regained consciousness. On April 22, 2004, eight days after the ambush, he died of his wounds.

On Nov. 10, 2006, the 231st birthday of the United States Marine Corps, President Bush presented the Medal of Honor to Dunham's parents, Dan and Deb Dunham.

Corporal Jason Dunham is buried at Fairlawn Cemetery in Scio, N.Y., with full military honors. Additionally, the USS Jason Dunham (DDG-109) was named in his honor. He was the first Marine to receive the Medal of Honor for actions in the Iraq War and remains one of the most celebrated Marines of the Post-9/11 era.

Source: https://news.va.gov/146947/usmc-cpl-jason-dunham-one-second-one-decision/

Honoring Vietnam Veterans

Minnesota VFW Post hosts vets for an annual celebration

April 2026

On March 27, VFW Post 1647 in Brainerd, Minnesota, hosted its fifth annual Vietnam Veterans Day Celebration. There was standing room only at dinner, as more than 100 Vietnam veterans and their significant others came for the camaraderie and free refreshments. The local Daughters of the American Revolution served apple pie and ice cream, while the Post provided dinner.

VFW Post 1647 Auxiliary member Sue Sterling, left, interviews Vietnam War veteran Ron Schrimshaw and his wife, Karen, during the 5th annual Vietnam Veterans Day Celebration on March 27 at VFW Post 1647 in Brainerd, Minnesota. Photo by Mark Persons.



Vietnam veterans are often distinguished from veterans due to the combination of societal hostility, isolation during their return, and the unprecedented psychological toll of an unconventional conflict.

Unlike the “Greatest Generation” of World War II, who returned to a unified nation celebrating victory, Vietnam veterans returned to a country deeply divided over the war’s morality and its conclusion. Many vets feel that the Vietnam War was a withdrawal of U.S. forces due entirely to political decisions based on citizen opposition and unrest, not to the failure of our military.

Due to the negative public perception, many veterans suppressed their experiences for decades, avoiding treatment and feeling like outsiders even within traditional veteran organizations.

One Vietnam vet in attendance was Buford Johnson. He was sent to Vietnam as an ROTC officer at his own request in 1964 and retired in 1986 as a Lt. Colonel in the Army Reserve. Johnson served as an advisor to the Vietnamese combat unit in Vietnam’s Central Highlands and often came under enemy fire. He recounted how a severely wounded soldier survived after he and a helicopter pilot heroically made a landing to rescue the soldier and fly him to safety.

Johnson came back to the States, wounded, and spent some time in an Army hospital. He was then assigned to Fort Benning, Gorgia. When asked how he felt now about his wartime experience, he responded, “It gave me a better understanding of human nature.”

Another vet attending the celebration was Brainerd resident, Ron Schrimshaw, who was drafted and sent to Vietnam at age 20. Scrimshaw repaired helicopter armament systems. He served in Pleiku as an E4 and returned home after serving there a year.

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Honoring Vietnam Veterans
Minnesota VFW Post hosts vets for an annual celebration

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When asked if his war experience made him a bitter or better man, he responded, "bitter." When he returned home, Scrimshaw's family was very supportive, but he felt rejected by the community. His biggest rejection was from the WWII veterans at the local American Legion who did not want him as a member. The VFW leadership collaborates with government officials in St. Paul, Minnesota, and in Washington, D.C., to advocate for legislation that supports veterans in their struggle to regain and maintain a healthy lifestyle as they transition back to civilian life.

Source: https://www.vfw.org/media-and-events/latest-releases/archives/2026/4/honoring-vietnam-veterans



Their stories prove that patriotism is defined by one's actions and commitment to the Constitution.

In honor of Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) is proud to honor our nation's Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander service members, veterans and their families throughout the month of May. The Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander designation encompasses more than 50 ethnic and linguistic groups living in the United States and its territories that have helped shape the American story.

From the first Japanese immigrants arriving in 1843 to the vibrant Pacific islands and Southeast Asia communities of today, these individuals have been an integral part of our national fabric. Their military legacy is equally deep, with historical records documenting Asian Americans serving in the U.S. military as early as the War of 1812, helping to defend a young nation that was still defining its own boundaries.

This legacy is reflected in the legendary 442nd Regimental Combat Team of World War II and in the hundreds of thousands of service members who have earned U.S. citizenship through their honorable military service. Their stories prove that patriotism is defined by one's actions and commitment to the Constitution. The presence of Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities within the U.S. Armed Forces ensures that our nation's military reflects the diversity that remains one of America's greatest strengths.

On behalf of the more than 1.3 million members of the VFW and its Auxiliary, we salute all Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander service members, veterans and their families. We remain committed to ensuring that every veteran, regardless of their background or origin, receives the support, respect and benefits they have earned through their service to a grateful nation.

Source: https://www.vfw.org/media-and-events/latest-releases/archives/2026/4/vfw-honors-asian-american-native-hawaiian-and-pacific-islander-heritage-month

Secure Storage Can Reduce the Risk of Suicide



May 2026

Chris Maxwell, Outreach and Events, Office of Suicide Prevention

Simple steps Veterans and supporters can take to securely store firearms and medications at home to reduce suicide risk

Creating a safe home environment is one of the most effective ways to protect the people we care about, including for our children and ourselves. For Veterans and their families, small, proper and practical steps around secure storage can reduce suicide risk.

"Lethal means safety" is about making moments of crisis, in which someone could use something to hurt themselves, less dangerous. It's about giving time and space for support, connection and recovery. Here are ways Veterans and their loved ones can create safer homes using trusted, free resources from VA.

Why proper, secure storage matters, and how to make it happen

Many suicide crises are brief, and unsecure access to "lethal means" (anything that can be used to engage in suicide behavior) during those moments can increase the risk of irreversible harm or death. Storing your firearm securely delays access during a moment of crisis. That delay can be the difference between life and death—giving someone time to reach out, reflect or change course.

If you own a firearm, storing it securely is a powerful form of protection. "Keep It Secure" offers clear, non-judgmental guidance on how to securely store firearms, especially during times of increased stress.

Proper firearm storage options include using a cable gun lock, lockboxes and gun safes. Secure storage also means keeping firearms unloaded, locked and stored separately from ammunition. Every Veteran can get a free cable gun lock from their local VA facility, making it easier to take this step without added cost, paperwork or burden.

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Secure Storage Can Reduce the Risk of Suicide

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Medication safety: Small changes for added protection

Storing medications safely, both prescription and over the counter, is another important part of lethal means safety. Keeping medications stored securely can reduce risk, especially during difficult periods.

You can store medications in locked containers, keep only necessary amounts at home and safely dispose of unused or expired medications. These actions help protect everyone in the household and support a safer environment during moments when someone may be feeling overwhelmed.

Check in with yourself and get support if you need it

Awareness is another powerful form of suicide prevention that can keep you and your environment safe. The Self-Check Assessment is a confidential tool that allows you to reflect on your mental health, stress level and overall wellbeing. Based on your responses, it offers personalized suggestions and resources that may be helpful.

And if you're a supporter or caregiver of a Veteran, conversations about secure storage can feel personal, but they don't have to be difficult. Framing them around care, responsibility and protection helps keep the focus on shared goals of safety and well-being.

Safety is a sign of strength

Taking steps to secure firearms and medications is an act of care for yourself, for your family and for your community. They affirm a commitment to life for you and your loved ones. These choices help create space for hope, connection and recovery .

If a conversation brings up concerns, or if you or someone you care about needs help, the Veterans Crisis Line is available 24/7. You don't have to be in immediate crisis to reach out, and you don't need to be enrolled in VA benefits or health care.

Contact the Veterans Crisis Line anytime: Dial 988 then Press 1, chat online at VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat, or text 838255. Trained responders can help talk through next steps.

Source: https://news.va.gov/146895/secure-storage-can-reduce-risk-suicide/

Memorial Day Reminds Us Freedom Isn't Free

May we not just enjoy the freedom they left us, but also strive to be a nation worthy of such a sacrifice.

May 2026

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – For nearly 127 years, the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) has served as the guardian of the veteran legacy, and this Memorial Day we call upon the American people to look past the onset of summer festivities to recognize the true, somber heart of this holiday.



Memorial Day is not a day centered on celebrations and bargain savings, instead it is a day of mourning and deep reverence for those who never took off our nation's uniform. It is a day to acknowledge a debt that can never be fully repaid … a debt owed to the men and women who have stood tall in defense of our freedom and gave their last full measure of devotion.

Freedom isn't free. Memorial Day reminds us that the cost of those liberties were paid by individuals who had dreams, families and futures that were willingly forfeited so that we may be free to live out our own.

The more than 1.3 million members of the VFW and its Auxiliary will spend this weekend at gravesides and memorials, ensuring that the sacrifices of our fallen heroes are never forgotten. The VFW calls on all Americans to remember that while we enjoy gatherings with friends and family, these moments are made possible only by those who are no longer here to join us.

May we not just enjoy the freedom they left us but also strive to be a nation worthy of such a sacrifice.

Source: *https://www.vfw.org/media-and-events/latest-releases/archives/2026/5/memorial-day-reminds-us-freedom-isnt-free*

VFW Honors LGBTQ+ Veterans' Service to Nation

The VFW takes the opportunity to recognize LGBTQ+ veterans for their service to the nation.

June 2026

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — June is Pride Month, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) stands with our fellow Americans in honoring the invaluable contributions and sacrifices of all who have served our nation, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ+) veterans.

Since the first Pride Month proclamation in 1999 by President Bill Clinton, the VFW has honored the estimated more than 1 million veterans that identify as LGBTQ+ for their service, and for proudly standing among the less than 1% of us who serve or have served our great nation.



The bond of military service unites all who wore the uniform, transcending beyond our differences and beliefs to protect American liberty. The VFW's mission remains steadfast: to foster camaraderie among veterans, to advocate for their earned benefits, and to perpetuate the memory and history of our fallen brothers and sisters-in-arms.

We are dedicated to ensuring that every veteran feels valued and has access to the resources and community they deserve.

In June, the VFW salutes all LGBTQ+ veterans for their honorable service and recognize that their dedication and courage are part of the foundation of our national defense.

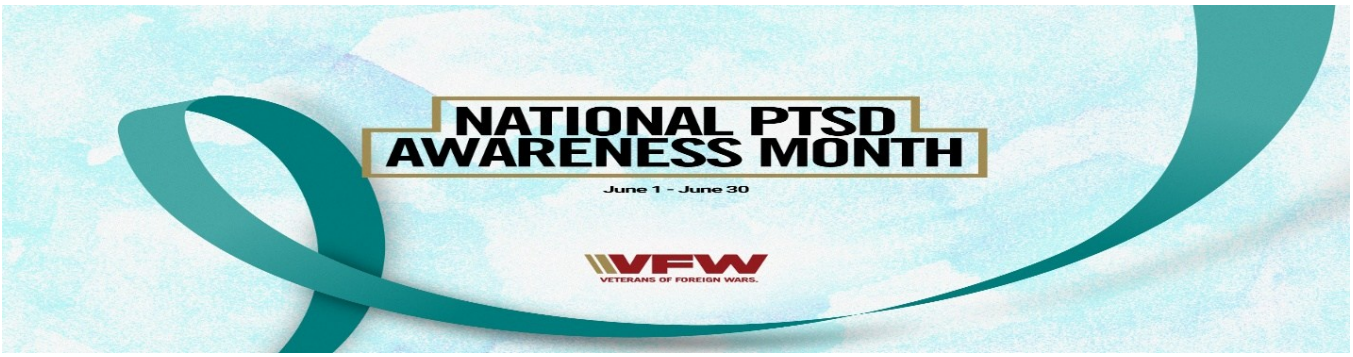
Source: https://www.vfw.org/media-and-events/latest-releases/archives/2026/6/vfw-honors-lgbtq-veterans-service-to-nation

VFW Highlights Importance of Mental Health This National PTSD Awareness Month

'Asking for support is not waving a white flag, it is a tactical decision to stay in the fight for your family, your future and your life'

June 2026

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – June 1 marks the start of National PTSD Awareness Month, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) is reminding America's military and veteran community that you are never alone.



Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a profound and lasting response to a single or multiple highly stressful events, many of which can be found in military service. For some, it is a mental and emotional injury borne from service to one's country, and while the wounds of war are often invisible, their impacts on veterans, families and communities are deeply felt.

When left unaddressed PTSD can lead to severe isolation, but the VFW is working to ensure no veteran navigates the darkness by themselves.

"Asking for support is not waving a white flag, it is a tactical decision to stay in the fight for your family, your future and your life," said VFW National Commander Carol Whitmore. "In the VFW, we do not leave our fallen on the battlefield, and we sure as hell don't leave our brothers- and sisters -in-arms behind at home.

Our Posts exist to be safe harbors of genuine camaraderie and trust where you can speak freely, without judgement, and be among those who have walked the same dirt."

The VFW continues its advocacy efforts on Capitol Hill, fighting to expand VA's mental health care tools and programs, including moving beyond standard treatment options, championing written, informed consent, and eliminating the administrative red tape so veterans in rural and underserved areas can access mental health specialists without delay.

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VFW Highlights Importance of Mental Health This National PTSD Awareness Month

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Throughout June, the VFW encourages all veterans, their families and communities to:

- **Educate and Recognize**: Learn the signs of PTSD and how to better support the veterans in your life.
- **Break the Silence**: Foster open, compassionate conversations about mental wellness so we can break down the outdated stigmas that keep someone from seeking help.
- **Offer Connection**: Reach out and check on your battle buddies. A simple call or visit can help bridge the gap of isolation.
- **Share Lifelines**: Keep vital resources visible. If you or a veteran you know is in crisis, call or text the Veterans Crisis Line (Dial 988 then Press 1; text 838255 or chat online), learn about VA's PTSD programs or connect with your .

For nearly 127 years, we have championed the rights of those who have fought for our liberty, and this June, the more than 1.3 million members of the VFW and its Auxiliary reaffirm our solemn pledge to Honor the Contract of their service.

As part of the less than 1% of Americans willing to serve and sacrifice for something greater than yourselves, those burdens are not something we will let you carry alone.

Source: https://www.vfw.org/media-and-events/latest-releases/archives/2026/6/vfw-highlights-importance-of-mental-health-this-national-ptsd-awareness-month

Congress Can't Do Its Own Job, Much Less Determine Veteran Disability Status

June 2026

For decades, disability ratings have been based on medical evidence and the real-world impact of a service-connected condition on a veteran's life. Section 108 of the introduced Take Care of America's Veterans Act — House Resolution 9237/Senate Bill 4744, sponsored by senior Kansas Sen. Jerry Moran — would move Congress directly into that process by changing how certain disabilities, including tinnitus and sleep apnea, are evaluated and compensated.

There are more that 200,000 veterans in the Kansas City metropolitan area, according to Veterans Affairs data, an estimated 65,000 of them disabled. That should concern every veteran and every member of Congress.



Congress can barely perform its most basic responsibilities. It routinely fails to pass budgets on time, relies on continuing resolutions to keep the government open, struggles to conduct meaningful oversight of the agencies it creates, and has spent decades trying to fix a Veterans Affairs claims system that remains frustratingly complex for many veterans. Yet now, some in Congress apparently believe they should be in the business of deciding how disabled a veteran is.

If politicians cannot reliably handle the responsibilities already assigned to them, why should veterans trust them to make individualized medical and vocational determinations that require specialized expertise?

The issue is not whether disability ratings should ever change. They should, when the medical evidence supports it.

The issue is who should be making those changes and why.

Continued on page 15.

Congress Can't Do Its Own Job, Much Less Determine Veteran Disability Status

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The ratings changes that members of Congress seek to codify did not originate with those lawmakers. They stem from a 2022 VA rulemaking proposal that generated significant opposition from veterans, advocates and stakeholders who questioned both the medical rationale and the practical consequences of the changes. The VA received more than 2,600 comments during the notice-and-comment process, yet Congress is moving to legislate the proposal before the VA has completed the process Congress itself established for evaluating such changes.

The Constitution begins with "We the people." Thousands of veterans spoke out because they were told their voices mattered. Congress should not make those voices irrelevant by legislating the outcome before the process has run its course.

Supporters of Section 108 argue that the proposed changes would modernize the disability compensation system and generate savings to fund other veterans' priorities. But disabled veterans should not be asked to finance veterans legislation.

Disability ratings are not supposed to be budgetary tools. They are part of the nation's commitment to compensate veterans for injuries incurred in service to their country. When Congress alters ratings to fund other priorities, it transforms what should be an evidence-based medical determination into a political calculation.

Section 108 raises a fundamental question about the future of the disability system: Should ratings be determined by medical expertise and evidence, or should they become another subject of political compromise whenever Congress needs to offset the cost of a new initiative?

If Congress succeeds in using future disability compensation as offsets, it would establish a troubling precedent. Future Congresses may increasingly view earned disability compensation as a funding mechanism rather than a solemn obligation owed to those who served.

Congress has a critical role to play in veterans policy: funding VA, conducting oversight, improving access to care and ensuring veterans receive the benefits they have earned.

If disability ratings need to change, they should change because the evidence demands it, after a transparent regulatory process has run its course, not because a bill needs a pay-for. Veterans deserve a disability system guided by medicine, science and the actual impact of a condition on their lives, not projected budget savings.

Disability compensation is part of the nation's commitment to those who served. It should never be treated as a budget offset.

This OpEd was written by John Muckelbauer, general counsel of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and published in the Kansas City Star on Monday, June 22, 2026, .

Source: https://www.vfw.org/media-and-events/latest-releases/archives/2026/6/congress-cant-do-its-own-job-much-less-determine-veteran-disability-status

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

1822 W 162nd Street, Gardena, CA 90247
Phone: (310) 324-6161

www.vfw3261.org

VFW POST 3261 OFFICERS

Commander – James "Jimmy C" Carradine

Senior Vice Commander – Anthony Dixon

Junior Vice Commander - Elvin Carter

Quartermaster – Norman "Norm" Chibana

Chaplain - Corey B. Ruffin, Sr.

1st Year Trustee – Corey B. Ruffin, Sr.

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