



*News From The ...*

## **COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS**

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### **American Legion Presents Legislative Priorities to Congress**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.**—Today, during a joint hearing, the members of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs heard testimony from The American Legion on its 2013 legislative priorities.

American Legion leadership focused on the growing disability claims backlog. Since January of 2009 the backlog has more than doubled and the number is not decreasing.

“When speaking to The American Legion National Convention in August 2010, VA Secretary Eric Shinseki declared VA would ‘break the back of the backlog by 2015’ by committing to 98 percent accuracy, with no claim pending longer than 125 days,” said American Legion National Commander James Koutz. “Over the past two years, VA has gone backward, not forward, in both of these key areas.”

The American Legion placed much of the onus for correcting the current system on VA. Leaders called for a plan that focuses on creating an updated system that holds VA more accountable for accurately processing claims.

“The American Legion believes VA must develop a processing model that puts as much emphasis on accuracy as it does on the raw number of claims completed. Nowhere does VA publicly post its accuracy figures. America’s veterans need to have confidence in the work done by VA, and that requires transparency,” said Koutz.

Rep. Jeff Miller, Chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, reminded those in attendance that oversight of VA remains a primary focus of the Committee and that making sure their tax payer dollars are being effectively spent on America’s veterans. This comes on the heels of the recent VA IG report on the Department’s conference expenditures.

“With the release of the report from the Office of the Inspector General on VA conference expenses, it is apparent we have a leadership void at VA. Without strong leadership at VA, I am concerned that some of the best ideas we put forth will never realize their full potential,” said Miller. “Not only did senior leadership fail to ensure effective planning for these large events, they also failed to ensure sound stewardship of taxpayer dollars.”

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