

VFW Poised with 2024 Priority Goals for Congress

National commander and delegates set to deliver legislative agenda to lawmakers

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WASHINGTON — Hundreds of members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and its Auxiliary will assemble in the nation's capital next week for the annual VFW Washington Conference, held from March 3 - 7. National leadership, as well as delegates from across the U.S. and abroad, will conduct the business of the organization and meet with members of Congress for the VFW's annual national-level, mid-winter meeting.

"One hundred and twenty-five years. This year marks 125 years the VFW has been advocating for those who have borne the battle," said VFW National Commander Duane Sarmiento. "As we descend on Washington, D.C., to deliver our message, we uphold the legacy of service upon which the VFW was built."

Joining advocates this week will be students taking part in the VFW's Voice of Democracy Parade of Winners, sponsored by Twisted X. Every year, nearly 22,000 high school students from across the nation compete to win their share of more than \$1 million in educational scholarships and incentives by penning a democratic and patriotic-themed essay. The first-place winner in the national competition will receive a \$35,000 scholarship, to be paid directly to the recipient's American university, college or vocational/technical school of choice.

"Fostering patriotism among America's youth is a core priority for the VFW," Sarmiento said. "Each and every year, I am inspired and heartened by the patriotism and commitment to democracy these young Americans embrace, and I am certain this year will be no different."

One of the final events of the Washington Conference is the annual commander-in-chief's testimony set for March 6 at 10 a.m. (EST) before a special joint hearing of the House and Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs held at the Dirksen Senate Office Building, Room

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“The honor of every commander-in-chief’s term lies in communicating the VFW’s legislative priorities to Congress,” Sarmiento said. “We have some big-ticket items we want to see movement on this year, including the correction of a longstanding injustice for retired, disabled veterans, and filling in critical gaps with military transition and benefit access. Unfortunately, we are still facing unaccredited, predatory Claim Sharks seeking to exploit unknowing veterans for financial gain. The VFW will not back down from this fight, and we will continue working to ensure these actors are held accountable for their illegal practices.”

Sarmiento is prepared to discuss the VFW’s top priorities for 2024. Key legislative priorities include:

- Concurrent Receipt / Passing the Major Richard Star Act.
- Predatory Claims / Passing the Governing Unaccredited Representatives Defrauding VA Benefits Act, known as the GUARD VA Benefits Act.
- Veteran Suicide / Passing the Not Just a Number Act.
- Military Transition / Passing the TAP Promotion Act.

Sarmiento also plans to call on Congress to address the health care needs of our veterans living overseas – such as the VA’s Foreign Medical Program – a personal issue for him and VFW comrades who do not have a consistent voice in Congress, but who support the national security interests of America around the world.

While some of these goals persist from last year, others came to fruition in 2023 as a direct result of VFW’s advocacy on the Hill. The Not Just a Number Act and TAP Promotion Act were both introduced last year following VFW members’ efforts to highlight missing economic opportunity data in government veteran suicide reporting and lack of consistent service member access to accredited claims representatives while participating in the military’s Transition Assistance Program, respectively.

Read the VFW’s complete list of 2024 Priority Goals [here](#).

The U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs will livestream this year’s testimony on their hearings page [here](#).

Visit vfw.org/VFWDC2024 for all Washington Conference updates.