

DEPARTMENT OF NEW MEXICO

Legislative

2023-2024

Michelle Dennisson Chairman

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National Ambassador
Sherry Howland
5470 S. 150 W
Ogden, UT 84405-6809
Densher89@outlook.com

Department President
Beth Miller
5475 Porter Dr. Spc. 116
Las Cruces, NM 88012
bethvfw6917@gmail.com

Department Secretary
Jeanette Garcia
8308 Waverly Dr. NW
Albuquerque, NM 87120
jdgarcia780@aol.com

Greetings, This Month has gotten away from me. Better Late than not at all? This month is known for Valentines Day and love is in the air, why not give some love to our Veterans by supporting their needs through the Legislative program? The Following is the Year in review from the VFW on Legislation. Remember to contact those state representatives about veteran issues that you may have.

Legislative Inquiries: Action Corps, vfwac@vfw.org National Legislative Service
Origins: In recognition that veterans of all wars need compensation, pensions, hospitalization, jobs, and assistance adjusting to civilian life, and to combat the public's post-war tendency to forget and neglect war veterans, the VFW established the National Legislative Service at the 1919 National Encampment in Providence, Rhode Island. The mission of the National Legislative Service has always been to stay abreast of legislative issues, safeguard existing benefits and secure new ones. HEALTH CARE S. 2372, VA MISSION Act of 2018 • Expanded caregiver benefits to veterans of all eras, which were previously limited to post-9/11 veterans. • Consolidates access to private sector doctors into one simplified and improved program. • Improves VA's ability to hire and retain high-quality health care professionals. • Established a process to evaluate and improve VA buildings across the country to better serve veterans. TRICARE • Successfully defeated proposed fee increases for beneficiaries. Electronic Health Records

(EHR) • Worked with Congress, VA, and DOD to ensure the veterans and military health care systems have an integrated EHR. EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND TRANSITION ASSISTANCE Forever GI Bill • Veterans discharged after January 2013 will have a lifetime to use their education benefits. • Adds additional months of eligibility for veterans pursuing a STEM degree. • Grants full eligibility for all Purple Heart recipients. • Restores benefits for veterans who attended schools that were abruptly closed. COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS Individual Unemployability (IU) • Successfully defeated proposed cuts to the IU program. H.R. 2288, Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017 • Ensures veterans receive quicker decisions on their claims appeals. • Provides veterans easy to understand rating decisions, new claim resolution options at regional offices, and dedicated staff to oversee claims appeals. • Preserves effective dates on claims for benefits. H.R. 299, Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2017 (passed house 382-0, awaiting Senate passage) • Restores benefits for Vietnam veterans who served off the coast in territorial waters. • Expands benefits to Korean DMZ veterans who were exposed to toxins. • Provides spina bifida benefits to the children of veterans exposed to Agent Orange in Thailand. Improved Benefits for Homeless Veterans • Extended authority for seven programs to assist homeless veterans, ranging from reintegration programs to grants for homeless women veterans with children. • Updated definition of homelessness in accordance with McKinney-Vento to include individuals fleeing domestic violence. POW/MIA H.R. 1892, Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 • Secured additional funding to ensure Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency is able to continue the mission of recovering and returning all MIAs.

Keep involved, be a presence for our veterans. Remember to report your activities and together we can all make the difference!

Have a Blessed Month! & don't be a hanging, Chad!

Michelle Dennisson