

# The VFW Veteran's VOICE



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Political Action Committee  
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When it comes to electing advocates for veterans, 2008 was a tremendous success!

More than 90% of candidates endorsed by VFW-PAC were elected to office. These are allies willing to fight for the issues that matter to veterans, service members and their families. When veterans unite, *America listens*.

The VFW-PAC endorsement sends a strong message to our leaders and their constituents. Thank you for making this incredible victory possible.

*But this battle is far from over.*

Actions speak louder than words.

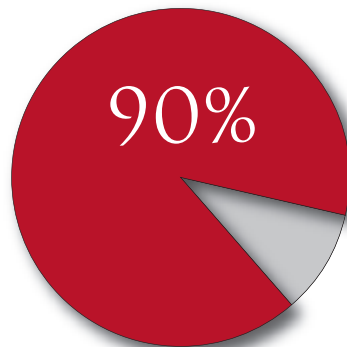
Our newly elected leaders must keep the commitments they made on the campaign trail. They must create and pass legislation that truly improves the lives of America's heroes. They must honor our heroes by providing the health care and benefits they need.

Right now, thousands of new veterans are returning home from war ... many with injuries that will plague for them the rest of their lives. It's vital our leaders stand up in their defense, and in defense of all those who came before them.

Your support of VFW-PAC puts leaders into office who honor the sacrifices of our heroes. Thank you for making your vote count and making your voice heard.



Larry W. Rivers, Director/Treasurer  
VFW Political Action Committee



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Larry W. Rivers  
Director/Treasurer  
VFW Political Action  
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# VFW Priority Goals

Each year, the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) prepares its official positions on important issues regarding national security and veterans' and military issues.

Here is an overview of the key issues VFW is fighting for on Capitol Hill. VFW-PAC endorsements are largely based on candidates' positions and voting records on these critical goals.

## VA Health Care

- Ensure a sufficient VA budget that properly fills the health care demands of all veterans.
- Establish sufficient, predictable and timely VA funding.
- Ensure unique health care and benefits challenges of OEF/OIF veterans are met, including increased funding for traumatic brain injuries and improved access to care.
- Increase priority given to women veterans by hiring specialized health care providers and by providing training in gender-specific issues to help address shortfalls in gender specific and mental health care.
- Improve outreach so that all veterans—especially female, minority and rural veterans—are aware of the range of health care services and benefits available to them.

## VA Benefits and Compensation

- Reduce VA's backlog of pending claims.
- Ensure VA's disability compensation program is fully funded and preserved in its current form.
- Oppose any change to current definitions of "line of duty" or "programs for disability and survivors benefits."

## Seamless Transition

- Demand seamless transition in transferring from DoD to VA, including an integrated electronic medical record that travels from duty stations to VA to wherever veterans receive health care.

- Improve veterans transition services and benefits, including viable training, employment and education programs to provide meaningful careers.

## Military Quality of Life

- Ensure that active-duty, National Guard and Reserve troops receive increased pay, affordable health care, and adequate housing and work facilities for themselves and their families.

## Veterans Employment

- Ensure that provisions of the Uniformed Service Employment and Re-Employment Rights Act (USERRA) are strictly enforced.
- Support the National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve to educate employers on the importance of hiring National Guard and Reserve troops and the employer's responsibilities as mandated by USERRA.
- Urge Congress to amend P.L. 106-50 to state that the 3% government-wide procurement goal for Service Disabled Veteran Owned Small Businesses will be enforced. This will require agencies to report their procurement levels and be held accountable if they fail to meet a 3% procurement requirement.

## War on Terrorism and Homeland Security

- Support U.S. troops and their mission to prosecute the war on terrorism around the world.
- Call for increased and timely funding to fight and win the war on terrorism.

- Support U.S. government efforts to take decisive and offensive action in the global war on terror.
- Secure U.S. borders, shorelines and all ports of entry.
- Halt the flow of illegal immigration.

## Defense and Foreign Affairs

- Increase Defense spending to fund all needed weapons programs, personnel initiatives and troop end-strength requirements.
- Urge the continued development and deployment of a ballistic missile defense system.
- Halt the development and/or proliferation of nuclear weapons or material by North Korea.
- Secure Europe through the continued expansion of NATO.
- Investigate the 1967 Israeli attack on the USS Liberty.

## Military Affairs

- Seek to improve the quality of life for all active-duty and reserve component members and their families.
- Provide a military base-pay raise to restore full comparability with private sector wages.
- Support efforts to lower the Guard and Reserve retirement pay age to 55.
- Oppose any TRICARE fee increases.
- Establish a Combat Action Medal for Navy and Marine Corps personnel.

## POW/MIA

- Achieve the fullest possible accounting of all U.S. military personnel missing from all wars.
- Ensure the U.S. government keeps the POW/MIA issue elevated as a national priority.
- Urge the President and Congress to fully fund the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command through a dedicated single-line item appropriation in the Defense budget.
- Support all POW/MIA public awareness initiatives.



## Meet Our Congressional Allies

When you support VFW-PAC, you support members of Congress who are pro-veteran. Here are two key supporters on veterans' issues, along with their recent accomplishments on your behalf. *Additional allies will be featured in future issues.*



**Senator Jim Webb (D-VA)** serves on the Senate Committee for Veterans' Affairs.

On his first day as a U.S. Senator, he proclaimed, "I am a proud veteran who is honored to serve this great nation. As long as I represent Virginians in the United States Senate, I will make it a priority to help protect our brave men and women in uniform."

On his first day in Congress, he introduced the landmark Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act (also known as the new GI Bill for the 21st Century).

*"As long as I represent Virginians in the United States Senate, I will make it a priority to help protect our brave men and women in uniform."*

— Senator Jim Webb

"In early '06, we began with the simple concept that those who have been serving since 9/11 should have the same opportunity for a first-class educational future as those who served during World War II. Today, we can celebrate the achievement of that goal," Sen. Webb said.

Sen. Webb's service in Vietnam earned him the Navy Cross, the Silver Star Medal, two Bronze Star

Medals and two Purple Hearts. Later, from 1977 to 1981, he served as counsel to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs. His dedication and leadership in sponsoring the new GI Bill, which was signed into law on June 30, 2008, have been honored with the VFW Gold Medal and Citation of Merit.



**Representative Chet Edwards (D-TX)** is the chairman of the House

Appropriations Subcommittee on Military

Construction and Veterans' Affairs. In his first year as Chairman, he authored the largest increase in veterans funding in the history of the Department of Veterans Affairs—\$11.8 billion in health care and benefits.

Rep. Edwards fought successfully to keep the Waco VA Medical Center

open and continuing its work on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. He also helped institute a 240% increase to \$1.08 billion in the 2008 VA maintenance budget. He defeated a move to impose reductions to the Survivor Benefit Plan for military widows, helped defeat the Disabled Veterans Tax and wrote the Military Retiree Health Care Protection Act (H.R. 579) to prohibit the Pentagon from raising military retiree TRICARE medical premiums.

*"I know we're facing a lot of budget challenges and people will be asked to sacrifice. But veterans have already sacrificed enough in service to their country."*

— Representative Chet Edwards

Rep. Edwards is the recipient of the 2008 VFW Congressional Award for outstanding service to veterans and service members.

"I know we're facing a lot of budget challenges and people will be asked to sacrifice. But veterans have already sacrificed enough in service to their country," he said.

### ISSUE IN FOCUS:

## Advanced Appropriations for VA Funding

Funding for the VA has been passed *late* in 19 of the last 21 years ... creating serious inefficiencies, wasting precious resources and hurting the overall care of veterans.

We are calling for legislation that would provide VA funding a year in advance.

Visit [www.congress.gov](http://www.congress.gov) and watch for updates on this issue.

## New VFW-PAC Board Members



**Larry W. Rivers**  
*Director/Treasurer*

The VFW Political Action Committee welcomed Larry W. Rivers as the new Director in 2008.

Rivers brings a wealth of experience in law, management, non-profits and veterans' affairs to the position, but most importantly, a steadfast commitment to fellow veterans. He has held top VFW leadership roles, including Commander-in-Chief (1988-1989), Executive Director of the VFW Washington Office (1989-1993) and Adjutant General (1993-1998).

Rivers received a B.A. degree in government from Northwestern State College and a law degree at Loyola University in New Orleans, La. A United States Marine Corps veteran (1968-71), Rivers served as an infantry platoon commander and company commander in Vietnam. His military awards and decorations include the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry, the Combat Action Ribbon and the Bronze Star with combat "V" device.



**Jane Poulin**  
*Board Member*

Jane Poulin has held numerous positions within the organization, including Auxiliary and State President, since becoming a member of Raymond J. Lavigne Ladies Auxiliary 9459, Lisbon, Maine. She is also a Life Member of the VFW National Home for Children. In addition, Poulin has been a member of the American Legion Auxiliary for more than two decades and is a Maine Vietnam Veterans Vigil Committee Chaplain.



**Kenneth R. Burton Jr.**  
*Chairman*

With an accomplished military and legal career, Kenneth R. Burton Jr. is an ideal choice to promote the interests of America's veterans on Capitol Hill. A retired Lieutenant Colonel (USAR), Burton is a practicing attorney in Texas and Oklahoma. He is also admitted to practice before the U.S. Supreme Court.

He has held a number of leadership positions within VFW, including Judge Advocate General and Vice Chairman of the Legislative Committee. Burton received his undergraduate degree from Westminster College and a J.D. from the University of Tulsa College of Law.

### ISSUE IN FOCUS:

## Seamless Transition

Thousands of service members are returning from Iraq and Afghanistan and transitioning from the DoD to the VA health care system. We are advocating for the creation of a system with a truly integrated electronic medical record. This record would travel wherever the service member is stationed and eventually to the VA where it would follow the veteran to wherever he or she receives health care. Visit [www.congress.gov](http://www.congress.gov) and watch for updates on this timely issue.

## About the VFW Political Action Committee

According to Federal Law, the Veterans of Foreign Wars cannot legally endorse candidates. To overcome the legal challenges of influencing on Capitol Hill, the organization established a Political Action Committee—a separate, nonpartisan organization charged with supporting members of Congress who share key views about veterans' issues. Funding for VFW-PAC comes from the donations of concerned VFW and Ladies Auxiliary VFW members.

### VFW-PAC Board of Directors

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**Larry W. Rivers**  
*Director/Treasurer*