

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS
OF THE UNITED STATES
FOUNDED 1899



WILLIAM A. THIEN
COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

VFW MEMORIAL BUILDING
200 MARYLAND AVENUE, NE
WASHINGTON, DC 20002-5799
January 22, 2014

The Honorable Bernie Sanders, Chairman
Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee
412 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Sanders:

On behalf of the nearly 2 million members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW) and our Auxiliaries, I am pleased to offer our strong support for S. 1950, the "*Veterans Health and Benefits and Military Retirement Pay Restoration Act of 2014.*"

This legislation is the most comprehensive veterans' legislation to be introduced in decades. It contains many of the VFW's priority goals, which will implement, expand and improve both health care and benefit services to all generations of veterans and their families.

This bill expands the current caregiver law to include all generation of veterans, something the VFW has advocated for since the caregiver law was signed; provides advance appropriations for all mandatory accounts, ensuring veterans and survivors will continue to receive their monthly compensation, and student veterans will receive their GI Bill payments on time regardless of future government shutdowns. It also improves and expands education and training programs, allowing veterans to receive in-state tuition rates when applying for college, and extending the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program.

It expands and improves mental health care access to veterans and their families, and provides expanded treatment for military sexual trauma.

This bill will also authorize VA to proceed with contracts to build community-based outpatient clinics that have been on hold for two years, and mandates that VA provides a comprehensive assessment of its capital infrastructure and how it will address those deficiencies.

This legislation also includes a full repeal of the military retiree 1 percent COLA reduction that was part of the larger budget agreement, a provision that has quickly become a top priority for our membership.

This letter of support only touches on a few of the critical provisions within this legislation. We thank you for your leadership in support of our nation's veterans. We look forward to working with you and your staff and all members of Congress to ensure the passage of this important legislation.

Moving forward, my staff and I stand ready to work with you to pursue full advance appropriations for all of VA's budget accounts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William A. Thien".

WILLIAM A. THIEN
Commander-in-Chief