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American Legion Backs 'Veterans First Act'

WASHINGTON (May 4, 2016) – The head of the nation's largest veterans organization praised the recently-introduced Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs comprehensive omnibus bill, known as the "Veterans First Act."

"There is much to like in this bill," said National Commander of The American Legion Dale Barnett. "Since the wait time manipulations and other irregularities were exposed in 2014, The American Legion has demanded accountability. This legislation will shorten the grievance process, make it easier to dismiss VA officials that breach the trust of the veterans that they are supposed to serve and allow VA to offer competitive pay and incentives to attract talented physicians and other professionals. We hope that Congress will pass and the president will sign this bill quickly."

Barnett pointed out that accountability is a term that all veterans are familiar with. "I said during my congressional testimony in February that the men and women of the U.S. armed forces understand what the word means. When asked to stand in harm's way – knowing that fulfillment of obligations and responsibilities can cost their lives – they accept without hesitation. And they go about the business of executing their missions. That's accountability. The VA Secretary needs to spread that spirit throughout the entire VA system."

If passed, this legislative will expand caregiver benefits to include the families of military veterans of all eras. Also, the bill includes improvement to every aspect of VA operations, including the G.I. Bill and prescription medications.

With a current membership of 2.2 million wartime veterans, The American Legion was founded in 1919 on the four pillars of a strong national security, veterans affairs, Americanism, and youth programs. Legionnaires work for the betterment of their communities through nearly 14,000 posts across the nation.

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