



## PRESS RELEASE

Vietnam Veterans of America

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**IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**July 7, 2016**

**No. 16-16**

**Contact:**

**Mokie Porter**

**301-996-0901**

### **"The Big 6" United Behind Veterans First Act**

(Washington, D.C.)--The Veterans Service Organizations who are most often called before Congress for testimony on the state of Veterans Affairs, known in D.C. as "The Big 6," are joining together to call on the Senate to vote on the Veterans First Act. While each has been engaged separately in traditional methods of calling for votes--such as letter-writing and email campaigns--they're maximizing the power of social media to expand their outreach and get more veterans engaged, and have launched a Twitter Storm between 1:00 pm and 3:00 pm today.

"We've recognized that Congress is starting to respond to pressure from social media, so we are doing the best we can to optimize the impact each of our members has by enlisting them to assist in less traditional ways. While Twitter may not be used by most Vietnam veterans on a regular basis, our kids and our grandkids use it. Our families will be helped most by the Toxic Exposure Research provisions within the Veterans First Act, and we are glad to bring them into the fold so they can help us let the Senate know that we all deserve a vote."--**John Rowan, Vietnam Veterans of America National President**

"The VFW strongly supports passage of the Veterans First Act because it rightfully eliminates arbitrary eligibility requirements to ensure family caregivers of veterans from all eras receive the recognition and support they deserve. It requires the VA to research the association between toxic exposures and adverse health effects among the descendants of exposed veterans, and it makes urgently needed improvements to the choice program, which would ensure veterans who receive care from private sector doctors are not erroneously billed for that care."--**Robert E. Wallace, VFW Executive Director**

"The provision within the Veterans First Act that allows for the expansion of the Family Caregiver Program is a top priority for Paralyzed Veterans of America members. Caregivers are life-sustaining for veterans with a spinal cord or disease. They are the most critical component of our rehabilitation and eventual recovery, and their well-being directly impacts the quality of care provided to veterans. Caregivers for veterans of all wartimes should be provided with adequate benefits and resources, yet

caregivers of pre-9/11 are made to bear the responsibility—and the toll it takes on their own personal and professional lives—alone. We urge the prompt passage of this legislation so that this inequity will finally be addressed.”--**Sherman Gillums, Jr, Paralyzed Veterans of America Executive Director**

“The American Legion stands with our sister Veteran Service Organizations to support the Veterans First Act. This bipartisan legislation has one third of the senate as cosponsors and will ensure that veterans have access to a Department of Veterans Affairs that maintains accountability, organized leadership, and parity of services for all generations of caregivers.”--**Verna Jones, Executive Director, The American Legion**

“DAV strongly supports Senate passage of the Veterans First Act, which would extend comprehensive caregiver support to veterans of all eras. The legislation would also increase veterans' options for long-term care through medical foster homes; enhance VA's efforts to recruit and retain the best and brightest medical professionals; reform claims and appeals processing by creating a fully developed appeals pilot program; and make dozens of other positive changes to improve the lives of the men and women who served. DAV looks forward to working together with leaders in both chambers of Congress, the VA, and other key stakeholders to enact comprehensive legislation to help keep the promise to all eras of America's veterans.”--**Garry J. Augustine, Executive Director, Disabled American Veterans**

The AMVETS family is in full support of the Veterans First Act. Eliminating arbitrary eligibility requirements is crucial to ensuring family caregivers of veterans from all eras receive the support they deserve and need. We support the mandate on VA to research the association between toxic exposures and health effects among exposed veterans' offspring.”--**Joe Chenelly, Executive Director, AMVETS**

The Big 6 Veteran Service Organizations are asking their members, families, and supporters to join them during this campaign by using the hashtag **#Vote4Vets1st** in our Twitter Storm. The Veterans First Act is a bipartisan effort to improve accountability at the Department of Veterans Affairs, provide critical benefits to veterans in need, and improve existing programs. The veterans' community deserves a vote on the Senate floor before Congress is dismissed for summer recess. In order for the Department of Veterans Affairs to fulfill Lincoln's promise “to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow, and his orphan,” they must prioritize veterans over politics and pass the Veterans First Act.

*Vietnam Veterans of America is the nation's only congressionally chartered veterans' service organization dedicated to the needs of Vietnam-era veterans and their families. VVA's founding principle is “Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another.”*