



# VETERANS' BILL OF RIGHTS



## Circle of Friends for American Veterans

Since 2004, over 250 current and former Members of Congress have affirmed the Veterans' Bill of Rights to make sure America takes care of those who sacrificed for us all. We ask all Members of the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress to consider affirming the newly revised Bill of Rights.

By affirming the Veterans' Bill of Rights, Members are not pledging support for specific legislation, but rather are making a statement of principle for actions to be taken in support of our American Veterans. The Bill of Rights consists of four pillars:

### **I VETERANS ARE A TOP PRIORITY**

We affirm that American Veterans are a top priority for the nation's policy agenda.

### **II VETERANS DESERVE TIMELY ANSWERS**

The VA has long obfuscated the real average wait time on responding to disability claims. In May 2013 the VA Undersecretary for Benefits issued a memo called, "Fast Letter 13-10." The memo advised: "Use the date a previously unadjudicated claim is discovered as the date of claim for system control purposes." Later rescinded, the VAIG recently said the subterfuge was "by design in the "flawed" memo. Current VA estimates of wait time are highly questionable at best. We affirm the wait time for veterans filing a claim should be no more than the goal the VA set for itself: 125 days.

### **III NEGOTIATION IN VA PROCUREMENT SERVICES**

An extensive GAO investigation found that the VA procurement system is wasting billions of dollars of the taxpayers' money. The VA was found to spend \$7 billion in issuing over 130,000 purchase orders for which there was no negotiation of services for competitive rates. 70% of the purchase orders had no vendors' names. We affirm that the VA should negotiate for its procurement services.

### **IV VA COLLECTION OF INSURANCE FEES**

Several GAO and VAIG investigations into billing and collecting processes showed that the VA failed to collect a staggering amount of money over time from insurance companies. "Inadequate management and little or no oversight" resulted in coding errors and outright failures to follow up on collections" said the original GAO report, which found there are "no policies or procedures for oversight" at the \$140 billion agency. While the VA has made significant strides in collection of funds that can be earmarked for more services to veterans, much more needs to be done. We affirm that the VA should collect on all possible past and ongoing insurance fees owed to the agency.

With a growing need for adequate veteran services in face of a huge national deficit, more appropriations are not a viable or needed option. Very strict oversight and reform of VA fiscal management can be converted to broader critical services, with no extra cost to tax payers.

As in years past, the Circle of Friends for American Veterans will proudly publicize Members who affirm the Bill of Rights as Champions for American Veterans to the national, regional, and local media in every state and Congressional District in America.