

VETERAN news & notes

Should Veterans Pay For The VA's Problems?

By Ray C. Sisk, Commander-In-Chief, Veterans Of Foreign Wars of the United States.

(NAPSA)—Recently, I had the honor and privilege of speaking before the Senate's Veterans' Affairs Committee.

At that time, I spoke about the passing of Gertrude Janeway on January 17, 2003. Mrs. Janeway was the widow of a Union veteran



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of the Civil War, John Janeway, whom she referred to as the "love of her life."

Why is this of note? It is of note because, according to the article, she received a \$70 pension check each month from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

It is of note because the Civil War ended in 1865 and our government took care of this widow until 2003. And it is of note because it is one of the finest examples of our nation's compassion and commitment to "care for him who shall have borne the battle, his widow, and his orphan."

If only it were as simple as paying a pension check once a month for the VA to meet all its commitments—commitment to our comrades in arms; commitment to our nation's sick and disabled veter-

ans; commitment to their survivors and dependents; and commitment to ensuring that a promise made by a grateful nation is a promise kept.

No veteran should ever be left behind. While we certainly applaud the President for requesting funding increases for VA in this uncertain fiscal climate, we find ourselves adamantly opposed to the way in which he proposes to achieve those increases.

We do not support the legislative proposal contained in VA's budget request to charge a \$250 annual enrollment fee to non-service connected veterans in priority groups 7 and 8. We also disagree with the proposal to sharply increase user-fees for pharmaceuticals and outpatient care.

Shifting the cost burden to the veteran is not an acceptable solution to VA's financial problems and is incongruous with this nation's obligation to them.

The only way veterans will have access to timely, top quality and readily accessible healthcare is to remove VA healthcare from the appropriations process and mandate a fair and necessary budget for VA.

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