The Voice of Experience
VETERAN VOICE

35 cents

VOL. 1/ISSUE 25 FRIDAY, APRIL 26, 2013

Welcome home brother

U.S. Army veteran Art Boinay greets Paul Wagner, Marine Corps veteran at the Stuart Sailfish Regatta in Stuart Sunday, April 21. Art was representing the Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 1041 of Martin County.

Mitch Kloorfain
chief photographer

President proposes more for vets

VFW and DAV say the president's proposed budget still short

By Patrick McCallister
For Veteran Voice

President Barack Obama recently sent Congress the administration's proposed 2013-2014 Department of Veterans Affairs budget.

In all, the president proposed a $152.7 billion budget, which is about 10 percent more than the current fiscal year. However, about $86.1 billion is mandatory spending, such as disability compensation and pensions.

The part most veterans and their advocates watch for is discretionary spending, which includes a wide array of things from medical and prosthetics research to staffing for evaluating claims. That portion of the president's proposed budget is about $66.5 billion. Congress appropriated about $64 billion for discretionary spending at the VA this fiscal year, which is close to $2.7 billion more than for 2012.

The proposed budget is getting lukewarm reviews from some veteran service organizations.

"It's a mixed bag," Ray Kelley, the national legislative director of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, said. "There's some good stuff and there's some bad stuff."

The VFW is one of the authors of the annual Independent Budget. The annual report and recommendations to Congress is co-authored by the Paralyzed Veterans of America, Disabled American Veterans, AMVETS and VFW. Another 54 organizations —such as the American Psychiatric Association, Easter Seals, and Air Force Association — added their support to recommendations in the Independent Budget this year.

The Independent Budget recommends increasing discretionary

See BUDGET page 3

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OUR MISSION STATEMENT
AND OUR OBJECTIVE

Veteran Voice is a weekly publication designed to provide information to and about veterans to veterans and to the broader community. Veterans are an integral part of their Florida communities, which currently have individual organizations of their own, such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion, the Vietnam Veterans of America and many other groups with a narrow focus, but no convenient way to connect to a wider population of veterans and to the community in general within a limited geographic area, their community.

The mission of Veteran Voice is to publish a weekly source of information that will provide, in one place, a listing of resources available to veterans, articles about changes in policies or organizations affecting veterans and events of interest to veterans as well as articles about veterans of interest to the general public.

Veteran Voice LLC is organized as a partnership of experienced newspaper executives with an interest in veterans and in the communities of Florida veterans and friends. Veteran Voice is a start-up intended to address a perceived lack of information readily available to veterans on programs and policies affecting them and objective reporting of veteran affairs to the public. To our knowledge, and based on comments from leaders of local veterans organizations, there was no media or website currently meeting this need until the launch of Veteran Voice.

We hope you agree, and will support this publication with your subscription. Without subscriptions there will be a limited number of people we can help, without which this mission will not be realized. As part of our commitment to supporting local veteran communities, we will donate 10 percent of our profits each quarter to qualified veteran charities recommended by you, our readers and subscribers. Please let us know what you think by emailing news@veteranvoiceweekly.com or mailing your comments to us at **1919 S.W. South Macedo Blvd., Port St. Lucie, FL 34984.**

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veterans@stlucieco.org

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BUDGET from page 1

spending to about $68.4 billion for the 2014 fiscal year, almost $2 billion more than the administration proposed.

Joe Violante, national legislative director for the DAV, said his organization is barely lukewarm about the president's proposed budget. He said it's status quo in areas that have long needed improvements.

"Some concerns," he said. "No. 1, with regards to medical care, we're probably about $1.2, $1.3 billion above the administration's recommendations for medical care. In construction, we're looking at a $1.1 billion difference between what we're recommending and the administration is recommending."

Violante said that the VA has lagged behind in construction since the 1990s, and it's been a bipartisan problem that emerges from the executive and legislative branches of government.

"All the administrations since Clinton have not put sufficient funding in there and Congress doesn't raise it," he said.

Kelley, too, said that needed capital dollars are missing from the Obama administration's latest proposed budget for VA.

"VA's buildings are about 60 years old on average," he said.

Kelley said the administration did please the VFW with its information technology recommendations.

"The administration asked for a pretty good chunk for their IT budget, which is good," he said. "Last year, the IT budget was $3.3 billion. This year the administration is requesting nearly $3.7. The Independent Budget requested $3.4 (billion)."

Kelley said improvements in IT can help VA reduce the famous claims backlog. For the last few years the VA has had about 900,000 pending benefit claims at any given time. Additionally, in recent years, about 600,000 claims have been awaiting decisions for 125 or more days. With improvements to IT, the VA can increasingly use faster, paperless methods to receive and review claims.

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Additionally, the VA is experimenting with delivering some medical services over the Internet. For example, a veteran with traumatic-brain injuries living in Indian River County could regularly visit with a specialist in California through video conferencing. This use of information technology can presumably spare veterans traveling time and expenses to medical appointments, and help the VA reduce its costs, too.

Kelley said Congress will likely inflate the administration's VA budget recommendations.

"They generally come up with something a little better than the administration asked, and little less than what we asked," he said.

Representative Bill Posey —Brevard and Indian River counties— said he's gathering information before supporting the administration's proposed VA budget, or working to increase it.

"The president's budget was just released and I'm still evaluating the details of what the president is proposing," he said in an e-mailed response to questions.

Representative Patrick Murphy —St. Lucie and Martin counties— said through a spokeswoman that he'd like to see the 2013-2014 VA budget closer to the Independent Budget recommendations. However…

"While we would like to see it meet the request made in the Independent Budget, during these difficult economic times when government spending is being drastically cut, the president's request is moving in the right direction and may be more realistic."

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Veterans organizations use community service to grow

Photo courtesy of Tom Belford, Post 318 historian

Officers from American Legion Post 318, District 12 and the Department of Florida pose for a photo during the groundbreaking ceremony for American Legion Post 318's future home on Savannah Road in Port St. Lucie. From left, Jim Burk, past commander, Post 318; Tom Belform, Post 318 historian; Al Dudley, Department of Florida American Legion commander; Al Diaz, District 12 commander; Art Schwabe, Department of Florida American Legion Vice commander, and Carl SChneider, District 12 vice commander.

By Patrick McCallister
For Veteran Voice

The American Legion Post 318 is growing.

"We average around 50, 75 at every meeting," Daryl Bowie, commander, said. "We have state guys come down and say, 'Wow, what are you doing?'"

The Vietnam Veterans of America Florida State Council is also growing. President Ben Humphries said the organization is going from 20 to 25 chapters in coming months.

"I've told (chapters) to do the county fairs, the art festivals," he said. "Put up a booth. Invariably, they come back to me and say, 'We have people come up and say they didn't know we existed."

And some of those people are joining.

Since the 1990s, veterans organizations have generally been watching their national membership rolls slipping, and numerous posts have closed in Florida and the nation.

They're not alone.

Other venerable service organizations, such as the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, have also seen their membership slowly decaying. Church denominations, on the whole, have also watched their memberships declining, too.

A number of social changes have contributed to the declines. Among veterans organizations, shrinking population is one.

According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, there are about 22.7 million military veterans living in the U.S. As military equipment improved and accompanying jobs become more specialized, the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard and National Guard needed fewer members. By 2035, the number of veterans is expected to drop to 14 million.

From 2000 to 2010, there was about a 15 percent decrease in veterans, as older veterans died, but weren't being replaced with as many younger ones. Florida lost somewhere between 11 to 19 percent of its population of veterans. However, it remains one of only four states with more than a million veterans, according to the state Department of Veterans Affairs — a state agency separate from the federal Department of Veterans Affairs.

See POST 318 page 7

"I've told (chapters) to do the county fairs, the art festivals. Put up a booth. Invariably, they come back to me and say, 'We have people come up and say they didn't know we existed."

Daryl Bowie
Post Commander
American Legion
Post 318

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Photo courtesy of Tom Belford, Post 318 historian

American Legion Post 318 Commander Daryl Bowie addresses fellow Legionnaires and guests during the groundbreaking ceremony for the Post's future headquarters.

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Photo courtesy of Tom Belford, Post 318 historian

Dignataries at the groundbreaking ceremony for American Legion Post 318's new building. From left, Mike Graves, St. Lucie County Sheriff's Office; Dan Braden, architect; Todd Mowery, St. Lucie County Commission; Ron Bowen, Port St. Lucie City Council; Shawn Williams, loan officer, Harbor Community Bank; Jeff Powers, Powers Contruction; Joanne Faiella, Port St. Lucie mayor; Al Dudley, Department of Florida American Legion commander; Daryl Bowie, Post 318 commander; Al Diaz, American Legion District 12 commander.

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Photo courtesy of Tom Belford, Post 318 historian

American Legion Post 318 Color Guard presents the colors during the groundbreaking ceremony Saturday, April 20 for the Post's future headquarters in on Savannah Road in Port St. Lucie.

POST 318 from page 4

While the veterans population is shrinking, the pool of those eligible to join the American Legion is likely swelling. To join, members must have been in service at certain times, such as Dec. 7, 1941 to Dec. 31, 1946 —World War II. Those currently serving in military have qualified to join the Legion. Those who served since Aug. 2, 1990, which it counts as the Gulf War and War on Terrorism, are eligible to join the Legion.

The pool of possible members for the VVA Florida State Council is also growing, as those eligible to join often retire and move to the Sunshine State. Humphries said that those who served during the Vietnam era are the largest segment among the state's estimated 1.6 million veterans, perhaps about 500,000.

Bowie said that Post 318 has about 1,600 members, when the Sons of the Legion and Auxiliary are counted. It has about 900 veteran members. About 120 joined from July 2011 to June 2012. Since July of last year, 132 have joined. Bowie said the post will likely set a new record year for new members.

"We've always averaged 60 to 80 (new members) a year," he said. "It's picked up the last couple years."

Nevertheless, Bowie said that he looks at demographics and wonders how to increase the growth even more.

"There's still a lot of room to grow, because of the number of veterans in St. Lucie County," he said.

Bowie said the post will likely set a new record year for new members. "We've always averaged 60 to 80 (new members) a year," he said. "It's picked up the last couple years."

Humphries said that the VVA has about 3,000 members in Florida.

"I would say we have grown at least 10 percent in the calendar year of 2012," he said. "Ten percent plus. I look this year at growing no less than 10 percent."

The five forming VVA chapters are in Okeechobee, Gainesville, Ocala, and Melbourne, along with the Boca Raton and Delray Beach area. Humphries, too, looks at demographics and sees much more growth potential.

Humphries and Bowie said that getting their posts and chapters more involved in civic events and organizations, giving back to the community, seems to have helped their organizations find new members.

"You can't help by sitting at the bar," Humphries said. "You have to get out in the community. What is the need of the community? Get involved with food banks, and (Habitat for Humanity). Get out and say, 'Hey, we're here.'"

Bowie echoed him.

"The more visible you are, the more active you are, and the more you work at supplying your members the things they joined for, the more successful you are," he said. Bowie added, "We have fun doing it. That's the most important thing."

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Leadership 101: How to get your member of Congress to call you

Let's start with getting him to know you first

Editor's note: *This piece was prepared and distributed prior to members of the Vietnam Veterans of America chapter leaders going to Washington, D.C., in mid-April for meetings regarding the VVA National Legislative Agenda. It's good, sound advice for any veteran in any organization seeking input from their congress members and senators.*

By Ric Davidge, chairman
Government Affairs Committee
Vietnam Veterans of America

Here is a checklist:

Every member has a district office and senators have one or more state offices. Some members, especially senators, have an office in every major community in your state. This is where you start.

Why start here, when you are really planning to talk to the congressman/woman or senator in Washington, D.C.?

Because you are a constituent of theirs and it is their local office that often gets the assignments to deal with local issues.

Unless you already know your member personally, this is where you need to start. It will actually help you get the meeting you want with some staff support.

Find out the location of the member's office closest to you.

Call the office and ask for a meeting with the staffer in charge.

In member offices, the member will have a local top staffer (state/local chief of staff) who generally oversees all offices in their district/state.

This is a VERY trusted member of the members team/staff (they are the face and personality of the member locally, a KEY STAFFER).

Once you have the name of this person, you ask for a meeting. You may be asked what the meeting is about and you tell them veterans issues and you will be in Washington, D.C., in April and plan to meet with our Congressman/women or Senator while there.

Now, you may find that there is a specific assistant to the member in your district assigned to work on veteran and/or military issues, another KEY STAFFER.

So you agree to meet with this staffer, but you want to ask to have the state top staffer in the meeting as well. That is because they can often make decisions that the "issue" staffer cannot, like setting up a meeting for you with your member in Washington, D.C.

If the top staffer says no, too busy or not available, you meet with the special staffer assigned veteran/military issues.

It is VERY important that you get to know this person. How do I do that?

Every time you get an email from national or others on veteran's issues and you think this KEY STAFFER may want to know about the information, forward it to him/her. Do this often — it's important.

Make this staffer THE person who knows that YOU are THE veteran leader for them to call if they have a problem or question on veterans issues. Most local office have questions about veterans issues often. I get calls every week from senators, governors, candidates, and congressmembers and staffers who have a problem and want to know if I can help them solve it. Yes, they call me, because they know that I know about veterans issues — just like you do.

Now you have made significant progress. YOU are THE veteran who your member's staff will call on veterans' issues. CONGRATULATIONS — you are in the door.

See LEADERSHIP page 9

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LEADERSHIP from page 8

You should communicate with this staffer no less than once a week. Yes, no less than once a week. If you need information to pass on, just ask the VVA Government Affairs Staff, or VVA Board Member or VVA officer. But you want all the information backflow to come through you. You need to be THE expert or you can ask for the VVA expert to come with you or get on the phone with you to explain some details. Make it a team effort. But you are the local contact veteran.

We will respond and be of immediate help.

AGAIN, it is critical that this staffer get to know you, trust you, respect you and have a sense of "team" with you. If you accomplish this, you have won.

Members of Congress are VERY busy. But they will almost always have time for someone who votes in their district/state. If they don't, it's because there is an immediate demand for their attention in committee or on the floor. If you ask to meet with them, they will most often meet with you. Remember they want you to like "them" and be a supporter of theirs. It's almost in their DNA. After two elections, it is — trust me, I know.

If you are told you cannot see your member but he/she wants you to speak to a staffer, do not be concerned. The member has staffers who actually do most of the work in the member's office. These staffers are generally assigned to a specific area of interest (issue area) and over time can become very well-informed about issues like veteran concerns. Staffers are your best connection because they will most likely be the staffer who follows up on what you want your member to do.

It is also important to understand that members meet with dozens of folks every day. They generally get in early and go home late, but are ALWAYS dependent on their staff to "guide" them to people they should meet with and issues they need to be concerned with.

Also, to help you understand the "power" staffers have, they often will tell a member how to vote on issues in committee and on the floor. Sometimes the member has no idea what the issue or bill is, will turn to their trusted staffer and ask, "H-H-How do I vote?" and the staffer gives them direction. Sometimes staffer have to wake them up first. No, really.

As a former U.S. Senate staffer and staffer to the Senate Minority Whip, I experienced this often. He never went to sleep — just wanted to note that. There are hundreds of issues/bills that come across a member's desk and they cannot be expected to read each one or understand the details of these bills, constituencies, or issues. That is why they have professional staff. That is why they have committees and subcommittees who really do the nuts and bolts on bills. A good member with bad staff will fail. A poor member with good staff will survive.

Now you have your meeting with this key staffer at your local district or state office. Understand that YOU have the power, because YOU are a veteran and you vote in their district/state. Members get elected by getting voters in their district to like them. So you have the power.

Bring an agenda with you. If possible get your agenda to the KEY STAFFER before the meeting so that they can be prepared on the issues. A good staffer will always do his own homework before the meeting. The more you feed them, the more dependent they will be on you. You have the power. You have helped the staffer look good and they will appreciate it.

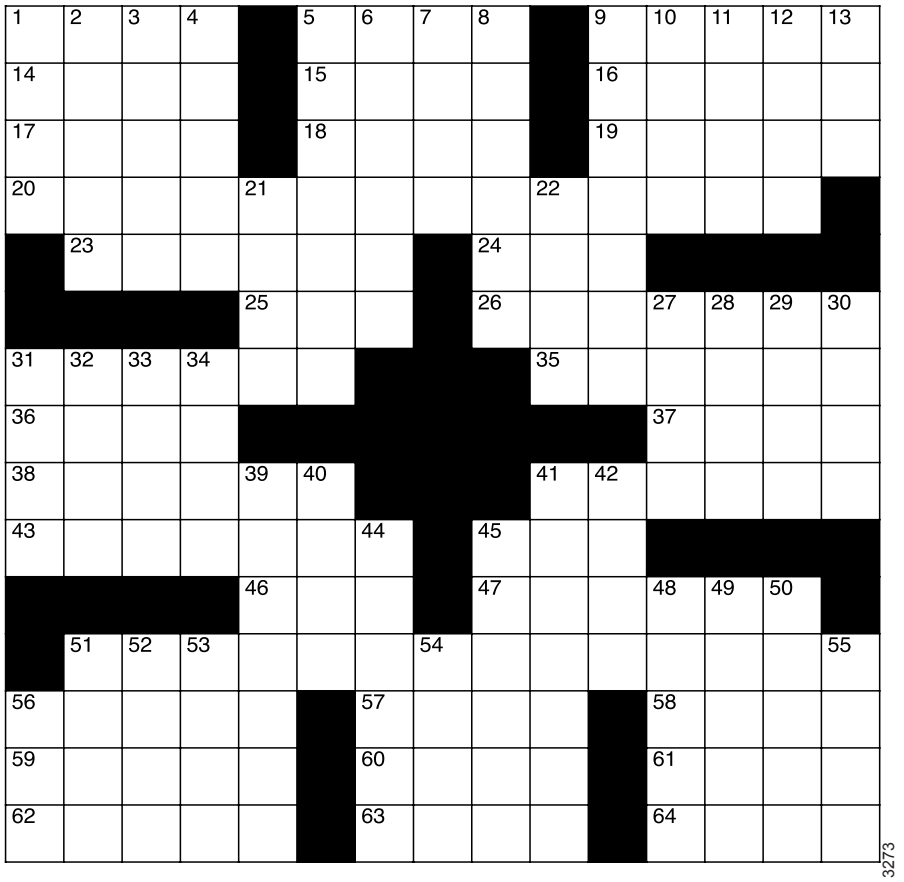
Meetings should not cover more than three issues, and generally only focus on one. So don't bring a laundry list of "issues" or complaints. Focus on no more than three and establish priorities. What is most important? What will change the life of a veteran and/or their family for the better? I know this is hard, cause we have lots of "issues," especially with the VA, but if everything is important, than nothing is important. If you need help here, ask.

Be friendly. Don't come to the meeting pissed off. I know we are Vietnam Veterans and it's OK if we are pissed off, but not here. There is a time and place for that later. Not that you don't have every reason to be pissed off, but don't be in that mood when you arrive. Be friendly, compliment the member or the staffer as your first item. Don't say that's a nice tie cause we all know you don't really care about the members tie. Be real but be positive, engaging. Get them on your side. Now they feel good towards you and are open to listen. You are a veteran — they already have respect for you. Smile and be friendly, but be real all the time.

When you come to the meeting, you should have your agenda in your hand. If you have others with you, each member of your team should have the agenda. If a member of your team has some specific knowledge or experience with one of the items, introduce them and ask them to tell their story. DO

See LEADERSHIP page 10

CROSSWORD



3273

CLUES ACROSS

1. Maple genus
5. Not what it seems
9. Overly masculine
14. X2 = Vaitape's island
15. Source of the Blue Nile
16. A way to dislike intensely
17. Copyread
18. Goidelic language of Ireland
19. TV advertising awards
20. Out of stock: purchase later
23. Ribbon belts
24. They __
25. Winged goddess of the dawn
26. OK to go out with
31. Symposiums
35. Bewail
36. The den of wild animals
37. Go inside of
38. Result or consequence
41. Lolium temulentum
43. Wrote a short composition
45. Occupy a seat
46. Grand __, vintage
47. Paved outdoor spaces
51. 1954 Milland/Hitchcock movie
56. South American racoon
57. Cold (Spanish)
58. About aviation
59. Deliberate destructive burning
60. Any place of bliss or delight
61. Largest river in Transcaucasia
62. Binding
63. A man of high rank
64. Islamic leader

CLUES DOWN

1. Urge and help on
2. Musical endings
3. Writer Jong
4. Places in rank order
5. 2 photos = 3D
6. Annoy persistently
7. Am. Natl. Standards Inst.
8. Female Dionysus cult members
9. Panga knife
10. Having sufficient skill
11. Currently fashionable
12. Fishing barb
13. Many not ands
21. Polite interruption sound
22. Grouch
27. Arabian chieftain (var. sp.)
28. W. German capital 1949-90
29. Having died recently
30. Organic compound
31. Take to one's heels
32. Klutzes
33. Jazz ostinato
34. Carbamide
39. Bike transportation
40. Length of office
41. April's birthstone
42. Tip of Aleutian Islands
44. Army luggage bag
45. More nimble
48. A citizen of Iraq (alt. sp.)
49. Greek or Roman performance hall
50. Junipero __, Spanish priest
51. Walleye
52. Moldavian capital 1565-1859
53. Egyptian sun god
54. Latin word for order
55. Wander
56. Whip with 9 knotted cords

SUDOKU

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1					4		2	
			5					
			2					
3		4						
	5	1	3			9	4	
	7	6						
					8		3	6
		5			9	2		

LEADERSHIP from page 9

NOT MAKE STUFF UP. ALWAYS BE HONEST AND TRUTHFUL. IF YOU ARE NOT CERTAIN IT IS TRUE, DO NOT SAY IT. YOU CAN NOT AFFORD TO LOSE CREDABILITY in this meeting. If you find out something that is said is not true later or there is some "correction" you need to make. DO IT as soon as possible and apologize for the error. Recovering an error is a good thing and they will again respect you even more. You recognized an error and were strong enough to point it out and correct it.

The "LEAVE PIECE." When you meet with a member or a staffer, ALWAYS have a "leave piece" for each of them. They will often make notes on the papers you give them. That is excellent. The member may turn to the staffer and say, "Follow up on this, please and let me know." ALWAYS have your name, phone number, email, and address on the leave piece — ALWAYS. Give them your card, if you have one. If you don't have cards, make some at home. The staffer will put it into their files and you will likely start getting mail from the member. This is a good thing. Of course when they ask for donations, think about it carefully — you are not obligated.

The leave piece should be short, double-spaced and in bullet form, not a single-spaced small font paper. Double-spaced and in bullet or outline form with a font no smaller than 12 points.

If you have other items you want to leave with them, hand them out during the discussion, but always go back to the agenda.

Have you ever had someone tell you a story or situation that has almost endless branches or parts and you get lost as they are telling it? Remember this staffer and/or member will likely meet with 10 or more persons/groups that day and still have to attend committee meetings and floor sessions. There is an enormous amount of "important" information for members and staffers to assimilate every day. Be kind; short lists are more effective.

Get their cards — ALWAYS get their cards. Now you have their name, phone number, email address. Most important for you is their email address. Put these in a business card file. Organize them by importance or in a way that allows you to find them when you need them.

Meetings with staffers and members should not last too long. Most meetings are no more than 30 minutes. When I was working for the Senate and then for President Reagan, ALL of my meetings

See LEADERSHIP page 11

LEADERSHIP from page 10

were limited to 20 minutes.

It works. People stop BS-ing and start focusing in on:

• What is the problem?

• What would you like me to do about it?

• What legal limitations likely constrain me in solving this problem?

• What are the cost implications of any of the solutions you desire?

These are they type of questions staffers/members will ask. You need to be ready to answer them — even better — anticipate them in your agenda. BUT if you don't know the answer, tell them you don't know but will find out and get back to them by a certain time/date. Then follow up — this is what so many people do not do and as a result they lose credibility.

OK, now you've had your local meeting with the key staffer. What next?

You tell them that you are going to D.C. and will be on the Hill on (whatever date you'll be there) and would like to meet with your congressmember/senator on your agenda and if possible mention how it will impact the members constituency. Remember they are always looking for ways to harvest votes.

Every member of Congress now has a very specific protocol/forms/etc. that you MUST use to see a member. Every member has this, for security purposes and for their records.

So you ask the local staffer to help you set up this meeting with your member. They will give you the form or tell you where to find it on the Internet and tell you that you MUST fill this out for scheduling and send it in as instructed. YOU MUST DO THIS and you must send it in ASAP. DO IT NOW if you can.

Members are booked weeks in advance and then they get called into committee meetings or floor sessions often with little notice.

Once you have sent in your meeting request, you will likely be contacted by the Washington, D.C., staffer who deals with veteran issues. They love it when you tell them you have meet with the members local staff in the district/state and have spoken to that staffer about your issues. They will likely call or email that staffer and ask about their meeting with you. You have just made big points with the Hill staffer and your local staffer friend.

You will need to send the Hill staffer your agenda. Again, you will NOT have a copy of the printed national legislative agenda for VVA until April, so we can help you send in an advance outline. The staffer wants this so that he/she can prepare for the meeting with the member. They don't want their member to be embarrassed about anything, so the more you help the staff help the member get ready for the meeting, the better the chance your meeting with the member will be successful.

How should I dress? You should dress like you are going to meet the president of the United States in the White House. You never know where your congressman/senator will end up. The first impression of you when you walk in the door tells the staffer/member if you are a serious substantive consituent. THIS IS IMPORTANT. If you want to wear your medals (miniatures) on your jacket, do it. If you want to wear your VVA hat, do it. Look proud of who you are and what you have to say. If you show this, the staffer/member will respond appropriately.

Don't get nervous. You have the power. You vote for this member. He/she needs you to like him/her when you arrive and when you leave. Start out positive; tell them something they did that you liked. If it has to do with veterans, great; if not, tell them the local bake sale to raise money for their campaign was great. START POSITIVE. Get them to like you.

Hand out your agenda — right side up, please, and then sit back and thank them for the time.

"Our first national legislative priority for this Congress is . . ." Then you start down the short list. You will note that VVA again is NOT asking for any NEW MONEY. They will be very happy to hear that and even more likely to want to help you on the issues. There will likely be NO NEW MONEY from this Congress for anything. This makes VVA quite different than the other Veteran Service Organizations. Members like this. They remember this, and are generally more willing to help on issues that will not cost NEW MONEY and use up their few silver bullets in working out a deal on a bill.

When you leave the member's office, what do you need to have in your hand??

• The member's business card and the key staffer's business card

• A list of any questions they asked but you could not answer

• A list of anything the member or staffer asked you to follow up on.

IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOU UNDERSTAND JUST HOW IMPORTANT YOU ARE. YOU ARE A VETERAN; chances are they are not. YOU HAVE THE POWER. YOU HAVE THE UNIQUE EXPERIENCE. YOU SERVED AND UNDERSTAND SERVICE. They will like you and respect you. You have won a friend and hopefully a number of new friends. They will call you.

Hope this helps get you all started.

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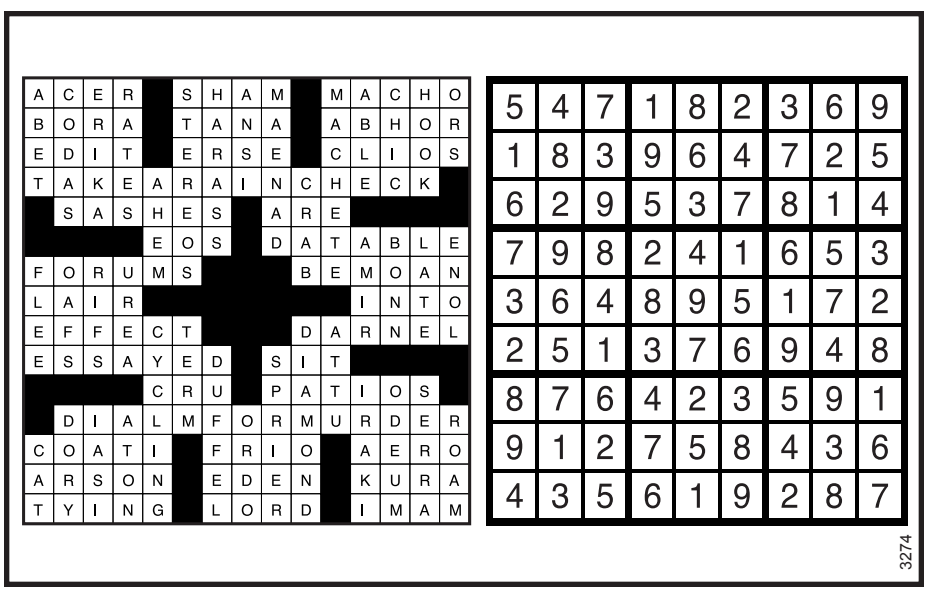

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