

STATEMENT OF
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VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES
BEFORE THE
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY MODERNIZATION
WITH RESPECT TO

"PACT Act Implementation: Modernizing VA Disability Claims Through Effective Technology"

Washington, D.C.

July 13, 2026

Chairman Barrett, Ranking Member Budzinski, and members of the subcommittee, on behalf of the men and women of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW) and its Auxiliary, thank you for the opportunity to testify on the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) ongoing modernization efforts, including the continued use and development of the Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS), automation tools, and artificial intelligence (AI) initiatives within the disability claims process.

While VBMS represented a significant advancement from paper-based processing when initially implemented between 2010 and 2013, the VFW believes this system is lacking in several critical areas and has not evolved into the fully integrated program veterans and their advocates need. Currently, VBMS functions largely as a depository for documents rather than a truly modern, integrated case management system capable of providing seamless visibility and coordination across the full spectrum of VA benefit programs.

The inability of VBMS to effectively interface with all VA benefits programs, including fiduciary matters, pension claims, Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA) appeals, and Caregiver Support Program claims and appeals, creates barriers that reduce the ability of accredited representatives to effectively advocate for veterans and their families. These disconnected systems force representatives and VA employees to navigate multiple platforms, duplicate efforts, and manually search for records and decisions that should be centrally accessible within a unified environment.

This lack of integration results in fragmented records, inconsistent visibility into claim activity, unnecessary delays, and increased administrative burdens for both VA employees and Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs). Veterans should not experience reduced access or diminished representation because VA systems operate in disconnected environments. When information cannot be accessed efficiently, the risk of missed evidence, delayed actions,

avoidable remands, and preventable errors increases substantially. These inefficiencies are particularly concerning as VA continues to process historically high claims volumes following implementation of the *Honoring our PACT Act of 2022* (Public Law 117-168).

The VFW recognizes that VA has made meaningful progress in reducing claims backlogs and digitizing records over the past decade. However, modernization cannot simply mean converting paper into electronic files. A modernized system should allow for full integration between benefit programs, real-time visibility into claims activity, integrated communication tools, improved workflow management, and greater transparency for veterans, employees, and accredited representatives alike. Modernization efforts should also prioritize system reliability and user functionality to ensure that frontline employees and representatives are able to efficiently navigate and utilize these platforms without unnecessary technical obstacles.

The VFW strongly encourages VA and Congress to prioritize modernization efforts that create a fully integrated, user-centered platform capable of supporting all VA benefit lines and appeals processes in a unified and efficient manner. As VA continues to expand digital capabilities, it is critical that veterans, caregivers, survivors, and their representatives are not left navigating multiple systems that create confusion and delay access to earned benefits.

The VFW also recognizes that automation and artificial intelligence may provide opportunities to improve efficiency, identify routine administrative actions, reduce workload pressures, and assist employees with repetitive tasks. However, the VFW maintains that artificial intelligence must serve strictly as a tool to assist employees and must not replace the human workforce responsible for serving veterans.

Decisions impacting veterans' benefits, health care, financial stability, and overall well-being require human judgment, accountability, and oversight. Veterans' claims are often complex and involve nuanced medical evidence, legal standards, and personal circumstances that cannot be fully evaluated through automated systems alone. While technology may assist in improving efficiency, it cannot replace the experience, discretion, and compassion required to properly adjudicate claims and interact with veterans and their families.

Therefore, all work products generated or assisted by artificial intelligence systems must be reviewed by a qualified VA employee prior to implementation or decision issuance. Additionally, robust quality assurance measures must be continuously performed on all AI-enabled programs to ensure they remain accurate, effective, unbiased, and consistent with applicable laws, regulations, and policies. These reviews should include routine testing, independent validation, auditing for unintended bias or inaccuracies, and ongoing monitoring to ensure the systems remain reliable over time.

Without ongoing oversight and validation, automated systems risk introducing errors at scale that could negatively impact veterans and erode confidence in the claims process. Errors generated through automated systems have the potential to spread rapidly across thousands of claims before issues are identified and corrected. Congress and VA leadership must ensure that modernization efforts prioritize accuracy and accountability as much as speed and efficiency.

As VA continues its modernization efforts under the PACT Act and related initiatives, the VFW urges Congress and VA leadership to remain focused not only on technological advancement, but also on transparency, accountability, integration, workforce support, and the overall veteran experience. Successful modernization must improve the ability of veterans and their advocates to access benefits, communicate with VA, and navigate the claims process efficiently and accurately.

The VFW remains committed to working collaboratively with Congress and VA to ensure modernization efforts strengthen veterans' access to earned benefits and improve confidence in the claims process. Veterans deserve a system that not only processes claims quickly, but also delivers accurate decisions, meaningful access, and confidence that their claims are being handled with the care and oversight they have earned through their service to this nation.

Chairman Barrett and Ranking Member Budzinski, this concludes my testimony. I am prepared to answer any questions you or the subcommittee members may have.

Information Required by Rule XI2(g)(4) of the House of Representatives

Pursuant to Rule XI2(g)(4) of the House of Representatives, the VFW has not received any federal grants in Fiscal Year 2026, nor has it received any federal grants in the two previous Fiscal Years.

The VFW has not received payments or contracts from any foreign governments in the current year or preceding two calendar years.