

# VFW Statement

Madam chairman, and Committee members, thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak to you today. This is the first time speaking in front of a Committee. So, please forgive me if I miss a few things.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars is a very strong organization in the state of Montana, with over 7,000 members. We as an organization understands budget cuts. This I'm sure the Legislative Committee will have some very hard decisions to make.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars is very much against cutting the Montana Veterans Affairs, Outreach Program, this will effect 44 rural communities. The Montana Veterans Affairs Service Officers are the only certified professionals who can legally sign off on a Veterans benefits or medical claims.

Our VA Service Officers are a very important entity to the Veterans of Montana. The Montana Veterans Affairs, Outreach Program is the only professional claims outreach program in the State of Montana. There is no one else who can legally step in. This is why it is very important to NOT cut the Veterans Outreach Program.

The Veterans Service Officers of Montana, this year alone (FY 2017) submitted 2,808 veteran benefit claims into the federal VA processing system. Of those claims submitted 270 of those claims were generated at outreach locations. That's about 9.6 percent of the agency's claim productions.

The federal VA claim products result in financial and medical benefits for the veteran claimant. In (FY) 2017 the VA claim work resulted in \$ 187,862,740 of electronic deposits into Veterans bank accounts. The 9.6 percent of the fiscal impact of claims is generated by the outreach program. This impact is estimated to be over \$ 18 million.

This is why it is very important that the Montana Veterans Affairs Outreach Program stays active. The outreach program is to important to the Veterans of Montana, but it is also to in the best interest to the state of Montana as well. The Veterans of Foreign Wars strongly supports that the Veterans Outreach Program is kept funded.

Thank you Madam Chairman and the members of the Legislative Committee.

Dean House

Member

VFW National Legislative Committee, and the  
VFW Department of Montana

Legislative Finance Committee  
Oct. 4, 2017  
Exhibit 34