

VFW leader sets sights on sequestration

By David Broyles
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Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) National Senior Vice Chairman Keith E. Harman told participants at an informal April 12 luncheon at Post 1115 he's setting a legislative goal of getting rid of sequestration next year. Harman, who is from Ohio, is expected to be elected VFW National Commander.

Harman said the visit last week, his first trip to Virginia, had been an educational and memorable one. Other officers present at the special reception included VFW District 9 Commander Howard Minton, Department of Virginia Senior Vice Commander Mike Boehme, Department of Virginia Commander Tom Gimble, Department Adjutant-Quartermaster Kim Deshano and Past National Commander John Smart.

Harman told participants he had recently returned from Southeast Asia three weeks ago. He set ending sequestration as his legislative goal next year (sequestration is where a cap on government spending is set. Should Congress enact annual appropriations legislation which exceeds these caps, an across-the-board spending cut is automatically imposed affecting all departments and programs.)

"It became a law in 2011 when they increased the budget deficit. A bipartisan committee couldn't come to agreement so a 10 percent reduction became the law of the land," said Harman. "Everybody across the board took a reduc-



Submitted photo | Donald Trausneck
Future Veterans of Foreign Wars National Commander-in-chief Keith Harman from Ohio address veterans and guests at VFW Post 1115 during a special reception for officials on April 12. Harman, who is currently serving as Senior Vice Commander, discussed many topics of importance to VFW members. Seated at the head table, left to right are Post 1115 Commander Martin Rivera, District 9 Commander Howard Minton (standing in the back), Department of Virginia Senior Vice Commander Mike Boehme, Department of Virginia Commander Tom Gimble and Department Adjutant-Quartermaster Kim Deshano.

tion, including the Department of Defense."

He said it was a 20-percent reduction for them because they are the largest organization. The impact is they basically have a budget of eight years and have ten years to use it. It has had a devastating effect on today's military since that piece of legislation became law, Harman said.

He told participants as their Junior Vice Commander he made his first foreign trip to Belgium and to five military installations in Germany. Harman said the immediate results of the implementation of that were all aircraft were grounded, all ships were docked and all on the ground training ceased to exist (with the exception of any unit deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan.)

"When Congress realized the impact it was having they put sequestration on hold. It is still on hold today but it is still the law of the land and could be implemented at any time. I have listened to Senator John

McCain say this issue should have never happened to begin with," Harman said. "I can tell you that being in Europe and listening to admirals and generals at NATO headquarters and those in Germany at military installations they were telling me basically the same thing our office staff told us in 2011. Today's military is struggling. They do not have the aircraft, with only 50 percent being available in the Air Force and the Navy. In talking with the troops the quality of life issues are always important to them as it should be. For those contemplating making a career out of the military with the constant reduction of forces we are left wondering if they can make it their career."

He praised the VFW legislative staff on Capitol Hill and in the Pentagon on a daily basis fighting for new benefits and to keep the benefits veterans currently have.

"The VFW is an organization that does so much for so many and we ask for absolutely noth-



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VFW Post 1115 members and auxiliary members joined representatives from posts in Mount Airy and Pulaski at an informal reception on April 12 with top VFW officials to share concerns and topics of interest. Senior Vice Commander-In-Chief Keith Harman was the featured speaker.

ing in return. What I mean by that is we have service officers nationwide. To take advantage of our service officers (offer) you don't have to be a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. All you have to do is to be an honorably discharged veteran to obtain those services. Over the past three years our service officers have been responsible for collecting \$4.5 billion in monetary benefits for our veterans and their families. I think that is commendable," said Harman. "We are here to serve those who served in the past, those who serve today and those who will serve in the future defending our great country. We do about nine million hours in community service work annually." He praised the support of Burger King for the VFW with the company contributing about \$4.3 million to benefit veterans through the VFW.

He said VFW National Commander-in-Chief Brian Duffy has dedicated May 20 as Armed Forces Day to say thank you to Burger King



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Senior Vice Commander-In-Chief Keith Harman and VFW Auxiliary member Paula Green fill plastic Easter Eggs with treats for last Saturday's Easter Egg hunt at the post. Harman and other top officials visited the Post on April 12 for a special reception featuring a meal prepared by the Auxiliary.

Corporation for its support of the VFW. He encouraged VFW members who have a local Burger King to pay them a visit, say hello, thank them and purchase something. Post 1115 Commander Marty Rivera recognized and thanked representatives from posts in Mount Airy and Pulaski and a meal provided by the VFW Auxiliary.

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