

Blumenthal & Veterans Service Organizations Slam Dangerous Narrative That VA's Disability Compensation Process Is 'Too Generous' at Hearing (<https://www.veterans.senate.gov/2025/10/blumenthal>)

Veterans Service Organizations testify to the Committee that efforts to root out fraud, waste, & abuse need to target claims sharks and bad actors preying on veterans

Wednesday, October 29, 2025

[WASHINGTON, D.C.] – At a Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee hearing today focused on examining the veterans' disability compensation process at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Ranking Member Richard Blumenthal joined advocates from Veterans Service Organizations in pushing back on recent reporting that claim VA's disability compensation is "too generous."

Addressing the witnesses, Blumenthal said: **"I also want to hear your response to those who believe that VA disability compensation is too generous—not my view. That's how the system has been portrayed by some opponents of the system in past years. These articles fail to understand or capture the purpose of the benefit. Instead, they cherry pick anecdotes to wrongly claim that disability benefits is fraught with widespread fraud. There is, in fact, some wrongdoing and fraud. We need to root it out, investigate, and prosecute it, but not abandon a system of compensation that is deserved and needed by veterans, our heroes who serve and sacrifice for our country."**

This hearing comes on the heels of **recent reporting**

(<https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/interactive/2025/veterans-affairs-disability-claims-fraud/>) from *The Washington Post* that conflated inflammatory anecdotes of fraud committed by veterans with an expansion of long-overdue benefits under the *PACT Act*, and the Post's belief that some disabilities are not "military enough" to merit disability compensation —despite veterans being legally entitled to receive benefits for having these disabilities.

Blumenthal later stressed his concerns with how this reporting gives water to dangerous proposals from OMB Director Russell Vought to begin means-testing veterans' benefits: **"And I'm struck by statements from the Administration, including the top levels of the Office of Management and Budget, [Director] Russell Vought, that means testing is maybe a reform that should be adopted. He suggested that the Administration should, quote, target significant cost savings from revising disability rating awards. I haven't heard the Secretary criticize or refute that potential course of action."**

Advocates from the Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), Disabled American Veterans (DAV), and the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) agreed with Blumenthal, underscoring the dangerous rhetoric of this reporting blaming veterans for fraud in VA's systems and condemning Vought's proposal to means-test veterans' benefits. The veterans' advocates testified the real perpetrators of fraud in the disability compensation process are bad actors—including unaccredited representatives who illegally charge veterans for filing for VA benefits known as "claims sharks" and predatory Disability Benefits Questionnaire mills who lure veterans into paying hundreds or thousands of dollars for inadequate medical examination. In addition, VA's Inspector General Cheryl Mason rebuked the article's claims saying, "There is no mass fraud going on [in VA's disability compensation system]. I take issue with that."

"...[W]e have witnessed an appalling resurgence of old, poisonous rhetoric. Recently, *The Washington Post* has smeared America's veterans as freeloaders, insinuating that their hard-earned benefits are too generous and are part of a system plagued by fraud. They talk about the cost of veterans' health care as if it were some line item to be trimmed, rather than the moral obligation of a nation that has been at war for a quarter of century...What truly drives bad behavior is not veterans, it's bad policy...If you want to crack down on exploitation, start with the real predators—the claim sharks who charge illegal fees, falsify paperwork, and profit from veterans' confusion and pain," **said VFW Executive Director Ryan Galluci.**

During the hearing—the first Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee hearing to take place during the government shutdown—Blumenthal also called out Secretary Collins and the Trump Administration for weaponizing the shutdown for political purposes: **"I want to say finally that the current VA leadership has repeatedly violated the Hatch Act by blurring the lines between governance and political campaigning. That is unacceptable. And there used to be bipartisan pushback to such behavior, I hope there will be again. Veterans deserve a VA that works for them, whether they are Democrats or Republicans, and avoids pushing partisan messages."**

The Committee also heard from DAV and VFW that their Veterans Service Officers who work in VA Regional Offices have been barred from the space they work in for the first time ever during a government shutdown. This limits their ability to assist veterans who need assistance accessing their earned benefits. Gallucci added: "These disruptions not only create uncertainty but also compound the challenges veterans face in accessing benefits and health care should a critical date be missed."

The full text of Blumenthal's opening is copied below and a video link is **available here** (<https://video.snapstream.net/Play/7PXPSTFHqo8jRaZESpLJVB?accessToken=r979u60s6teo>).

Sen Richard Blumenthal (D-CT): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to all of our witnesses. We have more than the usual number, and we welcome you here. We appreciate your public service as veterans and afterwards as advocates of our veterans.

And today's hearing is really focused on our nation's obligation to the men and women in uniform, and the system we use to compensate any of them who become ill or injured due to their service. We all know that the system inherited by Secretary Collins was not perfect, but it was providing historic levels of benefits to toxic-exposed veterans, thanks to the bipartisan PACT Act—which all of us on this Committee, I think, supported in a very bipartisan way. That same system is being dismantled through a series of really reckless policies, in my view, that have pushed hard working civil servants who process disability claims to the brink of what they can do. In fact, the Administration's draconian deferred-resignation program, return-to-office policy, hiring freeze, arbitrary contract cancellation, and other morale-crushing initiatives have driven out more than 1800 mission-critical VBA employees. The result has been a demoralized VBA workforce who is consistently pushed to sacrifice quality for the sake of quantity.

There simply are not enough people doing these jobs for the work to be performed capably at a level that our veterans deserve. It's created more work for claims processors, and today we're going to hear from our VSO witnesses on how this abdication in the name of modernization is impacting the veterans you represent. I also want to hear your response to those who believe that VA disability compensation is too generous—not my view. That's how the system has been portrayed by some opponents of the system in past years.

The articles fail to understand or capture the purpose of the benefit. Instead, they cherry pick anecdotes to wrongly claim that disability benefits is fraught with widespread fraud. There is, in fact, some wrongdoing and fraud. We need to root it out, investigate, and prosecute it, but not abandon a system of compensation that is deserved and needed by veterans, our heroes who serve and sacrifice for our country.

I want to say finally that the current VA leadership has repeatedly violated the Hatch Act by blurring the lines between governance and political campaigning. That is unacceptable. And there used to be bipartisan pushback to such behavior, I hope there will be again. Veterans deserve a VA that works for them, whether they are Democrats or Republicans, and avoids

pushing partisan messages. I will continue to fight for improvement and expansion of earned VA benefits, and I appreciate all of you here who are advocating for that cause. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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