

I'm proud to be here with Glen Gardner, Incoming National Commander-in-Chief of the VFW, and his wife, Jean. I've known Glen for a long time; I admire him. I told him I'm fixing to retire, so I'm not going to be around to work with him. But no doubt in my mind he'll do a fine job on behalf of the VFW.

I want to thank Virginia Carman, National President of the Ladies Auxiliary. (Applause.) Dixie Hild is the Incoming National President of the Ladies Auxiliary. (Applause.) I want to thank the rest of the leadership for letting me come by to visit with you.

I met an interesting person here today, a woman named Keela Carr. When I go to a city I like to herald people who are volunteering on behalf of the country. Keela has walked from California to Washington, D.C., to thank the veterans for their service to the United States of America. And I'm proud to have met Keela Carr. And I want to thank you for doing what you're doing, Keela. (Applause.)

And I want to thank the members of the Armed Forces that are here today. There is no greater honor than being the Commander-in-Chief of the United States military, and I'm proud to be in your presence. (Applause.)

America owes the men and women of the VFW a debt that can really never be repaid. You fought for our freedoms, and then when you came home, you volunteered to continue to serve this nation. Together with your Ladies and Men's Auxiliaries, members of this organization donate 13 million hours of community service every year. You mentor youth groups. You sponsor blood drives. You send packages to the military units deployed overseas. You provide vital services to your fellow veterans at home. In the VFW, we see the best of the American spirit -- and American -- America honors your service in and out of uniform. (Applause.)



When the history of the last eight years is finally written, it will show how closely and effectively my administration and the VFW have worked together on behalf of Americans' veterans. My budget includes nearly \$94 billion for the Department of Veterans Affairs -- which means we have nearly doubled the funding for veterans since I took office. (Applause.)

We've worked together to modernize and expand VA facilities -- and got \$5.5 billion of taxpayers monies in the budget to do so. The VFW and my administration have worked hard to expand grants to help homeless veterans in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, because we strongly believe no veteran who served in distant lands should have to live without shelter in the land they fought to defend. (Applause.)

We believe that combat-injured and severely disabled veterans deserve to receive both their military retired pay and their VA disability compensation. I was the first President in more than 100 years to sign concurrent receipt legislation. (Applause.)