

## National Legislative Division Weekly

### ‘WOODY’ WILLIAMS TO LIE IN HONOR IN US CAPITOL

Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer announced the body of Medal of Honor recipient Herschel Woodrow “Woody” Williams will lie in honor in the Capitol Rotunda.

In making the announcement Sunday, Pelosi, (D-Calif.) and Schumer, (D-N.Y.) said the proceedings honoring Chief Warrant Officer 4 Williams will take place after consulting with his family and Congress returns from the July recess.



*Hershel "Woody" Williams stands near the memorial for Gold Star families he helped install in the Doncel C. Kinnard Memorial State Veterans Cemetery in Dubar, WV*

Williams, 98, was the last surviving World War II Medal of Honor recipient. The Marine Corps veteran was awarded the nation’s highest award for his actions on Iwo Jima. He died Wednesday, June 29, surrounded by family, at the VA Medical Center in Huntington, W.Va. American Legion National Commander Paul E. Dillard called for President Biden to authorize a state funeral for Hershel “Woody” Williams, the last Medal of Honor recipient from World War II to pass away. Williams, a 72-year member of American Legion Post 177 in Barboursville, WV, died June 29 at age 98.

“Delegates at our national convention in 2018 unanimously [passed a resolution](#) calling for a state funeral to honor the last of these remarkable heroes,” Dillard said. “All Medal of Honor recipients are extraordinary and Woody Williams was particularly special to The American Legion. He was a proud Legionnaire who demonstrated legendary valor at Iwo Jima and then spent a lifetime serving veterans and Gold Star Families. He was a true American hero in every sense of the word. We extend our condolences to his family.”

Legislative Division staff worked with Congress to ensure Woody would be properly honored for his service to this nation.

## CONGRESS

The House takes up its annual National Defense Authorization Act next week, and the most consequential amendments may or may not be the ones that generate the most rhetorical heat.

By the time the dust settles at week’s end, the House will almost certainly have passed its fiscal 2023 NDAA (HR 7900). Members have filed more than 1,170 amendments to the bill, but less than half of them can be expected to be made in order. Last year, the House voted on 476 amendments.

## National Legislative Division Weekly

Depending on which amendments are allowed by the Rules Committee early in the coming week, the subsequent floor debate could see intense back-and-forth on a number of topics.

The House may consider amendments that could, if enacted, have a sizable impact on everything from disabled veterans savings accounts to the fate of international alliances.

An amendment of particular interest to the Legion has been offered by Reps. Harder (D-CA) and Fitzpatrick (R-PA). The amendment language comes from H.R. 5562: *WWII Veterans Hospital and Medical Eligibility Act*. This legislation was the direct result of Legion Resolution No. 3 (2017): [WWII Veterans Hospital and Medical Eligibility](#) from the Department of Kentucky. H.R. 5562 and its senate companion, S.1040, have both been reported favorably out of the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees.

In addition, a number of amendments have been offered which would either repeal outdated Authorizations for the Use of Military Force (AUMFs), place two-year sunsets on all future military authorizations, or express a Sense of Congress that AUMFs should include sunset provisions. These amendments are consistent with Legion Resolution No. 22 (2020): [Addressing the "Forever War"](#).

Other amendments the committee will consider include proposals to restrict military aid to Turkey and Saudi Arabia; another that would give the mayor of Washington, D.C., command over the D.C. National Guard; a change to Pentagon budget rules; stricter regulation of chemicals that threaten drinking water; and an amendment to require that Congress be notified when a president has ordered a nuclear strike under certain circumstances.

The nuclear amendment, by Rep. Slotkin (D-MI), would require that the Defense secretary, or whichever official received a presidential order to use nuclear weapons absent a declaration of war, must notify congressional leaders of it “before carrying out such an order.”

On the disabled veterans issue, two separate amendments, each with broad bipartisan support, would take slightly different approaches to changing the law so that the estimated 50,000-plus veterans who have sustained lifelong injuries in war do not see their retirement pay from the Defense Department offset by the amount of their disability pay from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The sponsor of one the two veterans amendments is Rep. Bilirakis (R-FL), while a similar proposal was offered by Rep. Ruiz (D-CA). The change is backed by a coalition of nearly three dozen military family advocacy groups. These amendments are consistent with Legion Resolution No. 224 (2016): Support for Concurrent Receipt of Military Retirement Pay and VA Disability Compensation.

Additionally, below are some other veteran-related NDAA amendments:

Pfluger (R-TX); Allred (D-TX); Miller-Meeks (R-IA); Meijer (R-MI)	Bi	VA to work with NASEM to study the incidence and mortality of cancer among individuals who served in the Navy, Air
---	----	--

# National Legislative Division Weekly

		Force, or Marine Corps as aviators and aircrew.
McGovern (D-MA); McKinley (R-WV); Pascrell (D-NJ); Fitzpatrick (R-PA); Kirkpatrick (D-AZ)	Bi	Eliminates the VA Asset and Infrastructure Review (AIR) Commission.
Cloud (TX)	R	Places 2-year sunsets on all future military authorizations & reauthorizations. DoD & State are to brief Congress on existing military operations.
Spanberger (VA)	D	Creates a presumption of service for veteran firefighters who become disabled by serious diseases, including heart disease, lung disease, and certain cancers.
Perry (PA); Crenshaw (TX); Murphy (NC); Bishop (NC); Posey (FL); Davidson (OH)	R	Stellate ganglion block (SGB) therapy treatment to be available for active duty service members and veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

## UPCOMING HEARINGS

- On Monday, July 11, the House Veterans’ Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity will hold a hearing titled “Ending Veteran Hunger: Examining the Impact of COVID-19 on Food Insecurity.”
- On Tuesday, July 12, the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee (SVAC) will hold a hearing titled “Hearing to examine pending legislation.”
- On Thursday, July 14, the House Veterans’ Affairs Subcommittee on Health will hold a hearing titled “Examining VA Community Care Access, Utilization, and Expenditures.”
- On Thursday, July 14, the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East, North Africa and Global Counterterrorism will hold a hearing titled “Examining the U.S. Interest in Regional Security Cooperation in the Middle East and North Africa: Opportunities, Obstacles, and Objectives.”

## LEGIONNAIRE OF THE WEEK

In an effort to recognize the weekly accomplishments of our Legionnaires, we will spotlight an individual every week. These individuals demonstrate exceptional grassroots activism by meeting with/contacting their Congressional Representative/Senator to advocate for veterans. Efforts like these truly make a difference and give veterans a voice in Congress.

## National Legislative Division Weekly

### Don Watnick, California

We are excited to recognize Don Watnick for speaking at our “Building Relationships with Your Lawmaker” webinar this week. During his briefing, Mr. Watnick discussed his experience as the congressional liaison to Rep. Nunes (R-CA). When Rep. Nunes stepped down and his replacement Rep. Conway (R-CA), was elected, Mr. Watnick immediately went to work improving his line of communication with her, having known her for a while.

Thank you for sharing your valuable advice, Mr. Watnick, and thank you to everyone else who attended. If you could not make the event, we will hopefully have a recording available sometime next week.

If you have made a grassroots effort and would like to be considered for next week’s “Legionnaire of the Week,” please fill out the Congressional Contact Report Form [here](#). You can also email me at [kisaacson@legion.org](mailto:kisaacson@legion.org).

**Lawrence Montreuil, Legislative Director  
The American Legion**