

National Legislative Division Weekly

CONGRESS

Wednesday afternoon, House Republicans released their proposal for raising the federal debt ceiling. The proposal would raise the limit by \$1.5 trillion or until the end of March 2024, whichever comes first. House Speaker McCarthy (R-CA) plans to hold a vote on the plan as early as next week.

Politico reported Thursday morning that House Armed Services Committee (HASC) chair Rep. Rogers (R-AL) wants to turn the committee's National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) markup into a two-day event. The committee's marathon markup, a DC tradition, has gone as long as 6am the morning after it started. Two years ago, then-



HASC Chairman Rogers (R-AL)

chair Rep. Smith (D-WA) threatened to adjourn until a second day if Members were not done by midnight. On that occasion, the committee narrowly met his deadline. This year's markup is expected to occur at the end of May. Rogers told reporter Connor O'Brien that the tight House floor schedule will probably prevent him from going to a two-day markup this year, but he has eyes on next year.

MILITARY HOUSING

Quality of life issues, especially housing, were a hot topic of discussion during this week's hearings with the three Military Services on both sides of the Hill.

This was especially true during Wednesday's House Armed Services Committee hearing with Army leaders. Committee chair Rep. Rogers (R-AL) asked Army Secretary Wormuth to provide an "aggressive" list of all related projects, with a promise Congress will find the money to start addressing the issues this year.

Housing was slightly less prominent during hearings with the Air Force, where security clearances and the handling of classified information took center stage in light of recent news. Air Force Secretary Kendall promised lawmakers an intensive investigation is underway as to how a 21-year old Air National Guardsman was able to leak documents in his gamer chat room for months undetected. Air Force units are also conducting reviews on how they are handling this information and access to it.

GOP DEBT CEILING PLAN

According to McCarthy, the plan would save \$4.5 trillion over the coming decade. For FY24, the plan would return the federal budget to FY22 levels, resulting in \$130 billion in immediate spending cuts. The

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bill released by McCarthy does not specify which programs would be slashed, but the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs (DoD and VA) would likely be untouched, or cut less than other programs.

After FY24, the plan would limit spending to 1% per year. The plan specifically reclaims unspent COVID national emergency funds. It prohibits going forward with the Administration's plan to forgive as much as \$20,000 per person for student loans, and forbids the Department of Education from taking administrative steps that would increase the government's costs of operating federal student loan programs. Federal work requirements related to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid, and other welfare programs would be increased, impacting some individuals and families that had previously been exempt. The plan would rescind the \$80 billion already appropriated to improve the ability of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to collect taxes and to hire more staff.

Independent analysts predict this could result in as many as a quarter of all SNAP recipients losing these benefits, at a time of rising food insecurity across the nation. When states have increased work requirements for Medicaid, enrollment has dropped, often due to administrative difficulties in reporting hours worked rather than individuals not meeting the new requirements. In most cases, overall employment did not increase in those states.

Even if the plan is passed in the House, the Senate is very unlikely to pass it. However, this does provide a start for bipartisan negotiations as the deadline approaches for the US government to default on its debts. It also eliminates President Biden's charge that Republicans have not come to the table.

Democrats continue to press for a clean debt ceiling bill, without any savings attached to it. While some Republicans have not fully signed onto McCarthy's plan at this point (especially in the Senate), a clean bill is also unlikely to garner sufficient bipartisan support.

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.

Cory Brockmann, Oregon

This week, we are excited to recognize Cory Brockmann from the Department of Oregon for meeting with the office of Sen. Wyden (D-OR) at his Portland office. Mr. Brockmann and Sen. Wyden's Veterans Advisor, Eric Davis, discussed mental health and suicide prevention and PACT Act implementation. They also addressed improving the VA Medical Center in Roseburg, Oregon, and reducing homelessness in Portland, which has a particularly high population.

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Thank you, Mr. Brockmann!

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.

UPCOMING HEARINGS

- On Tuesday, April 25, the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Technology Modernization will hold a hearing titled "Electronic Health Record Modernization Deep Dive: Pharmacy."
- On Wednesday, April 26, the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) will hold a hearing titled "U.S. Military Posture and National Security Challenges in Europe."
- On Wednesday, April 26, the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Subcommittee (MilConVA) will hold a hearing titled "Hearings to examine proposed budget estimates and justification for fiscal year 2024 and advance appropriations requests for fiscal year 2025 for the Department of Veterans Affairs."
- On Wednesday, April 26, the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee (SVAC) will hold a hearing to examine pending calendar business.
- On Wednesday, April 26, the Senate Armed Services Subcommittee on Personnel will hold a hearing to examine public integrity and anti-corruption laws at the Department of Defense.
- On Friday, April 28, the House Veterans' Affairs Committee (HVAC) will hold a markup hearing on pending legislation.