

TAL 2023 Legislative Point Papers

Mental Health & Suicide Prevention

The suicide rate among veterans is nearly double that of their civilian counterparts with more than 6,000 veterans losing their lives to suicide annually. It is imperative that asking for mental health assistance while increasing access to a variety of services along the mental health continuum be simultaneously de-stigmatized.

VA Healthcare Modernization

The future of VA healthcare is a hybrid system consisting of inpatient and outpatient care, telehealth and community care. Congress must ensure that the VA has the most efficient technology and infrastructure needed to reach veterans no matter where they reside.

PACT Act: Implementation & Oversight

The passage of the SFC Heath Robinson PACT Act in the 117th Congress ensured millions of toxic-exposed veterans will now have access to healthcare and compensation they rightfully deserve. The American Legion urges congress to provide the necessary oversight and funding to ensure VA has the resources they need to properly implement this legislation.

Protect Veterans from Predatory Actors

America's veterans are being increasingly targeted by predatory actors who seek to profit from an array of benefits that have been rightfully earned by those who have served our nation. Congress must oppose legislation that seeks to elevate the standing of unaccredited predatory claims companies that target veterans and impose a cap on legal services provided in association with the Camp Lejeune Justice Act.

Concurrent Receipt

Currently, 42,000 military retirees with combat-related injuries qualify for retirement pay for their service from DoD, and compensation for service-connected disabilities from VA. However, for retired veterans with a disability rating less than 50%, their VA compensation is deducted from their DoD retirement pay. The American Legion strongly supports ending this unfair policy of forcing many military retirees to forfeit their retirement pay to receive equal amounts of disability compensation.

Guard & Reserve GI Bill Parity

National Guard and Reserve servicemembers are increasingly called upon to confront unique challenges. Yet despite all we ask of them, they are too often denied a cornerstone benefit of service: the GI Bill. Congress must pass legislation that would expand GI Bill benefits to Army Reserve and National Guard servicemembers for every day served while activated under state orders.

GI Bill for Honorable Service

Currently, servicemembers with a “general under honorable conditions” discharges do not qualify for the GI bill. Congress must amend GI Bill eligibility under the U.S. Code to allow servicemembers who received a “general under honorable conditions discharge” access to benefits.

Support our Afghan Allies

For two decades, U.S. soldiers fought shoulder-to-shoulder with brave Afghan allies who served with and protected American forces, fighting for the freedom of Afghanistan and its people. The U.S. is duty-bound to fulfill the promises made as a nation. As after the Vietnam war, genuine and lasting protection must be provided to Afghan allies who have made it safely to the U.S. and to those who have been left behind.

Military Quality of Life

The U.S. military’s greatest resources are individual servicemembers and their families. The American Legion urges congress to pass legislation that would increase access to childcare for military families, increase appropriations to address matters involving servicemember food insecurity, and increase Basic Allowance Housing adjustment funding for military housing.

Pay the Coast Guard

While the US Coast Guard is no longer a part of the Department of Defense (DoD), its role in domestic national security is vital. Congress must increase the Coast Guard budget annually and must protect pay and allowances for members of the Coast Guard during funding gaps.

Protect the American Flag

Congress should change the U.S. Flag Code to codify patriotic and common customs and practices related to the display of the U.S. flag.