

## National Legislative Division Weekly

### GRASSROOTS ALERT: TAKE ACTION TO SUPPORT VETERANS EXPOSED TO TOXIC HAZARDS

This week, The American Legion National Headquarters sent out an alert to NLC members and Legislative Action Center subscribers to [call on their Senators](#) to pass H.R. H.R.3967 the Honoring our PACT Act. After one week of advocacy, the following numbers were achieved:

**Email Alerts Sent to Legionnaires:** 23,169

**Emails Opened:** 6,218 (27%)

**Messages Sent to Congress:** 3,014

**New Senders:** 347

This campaign will be the top legislative priority of The American Legion over the next few months. Status updates will be shared weekly, and Legionnaires are encouraged to disseminate this campaign far and wide.

### TAKE ACTION NOW

### CONGRESS

The Senate spent much of the week focused on the Supreme Court Justice vote and legislation to suspend normal trade relations with Russia and Belarus. It is always refreshing to see how quickly they can act when a two-week recess looms ahead of lawmakers.

And, thus, history was made Thursday afternoon. The Senate, on a 53-47 vote, confirmed Ketanji Brown Jackson as the first Black female justice on the US Supreme Court. This was made possible in a divided Senate because Senate Minority Leader McConnell (R-KY), in 2017, lowered the threshold for confirming a Supreme Court justice from 60 to 51 votes.

Republican Senators this week blocked cloture on the COVID supplemental spending bill, which means no action on this until after the recess. The Republican Senators were trying to force a vote on maintaining the immigration-related Title 42 policy from the previous Administration. President Biden has proposed lifting this policy, which provides for those coming into the US to be quickly expelled to their country of origin or, at the Southern border, back into Mexico.

House Appropriations Committee (HAC) chair Rep. DeLauro (D-CT) is trying to prevent the FY22 gridlock. At her insistence, the chairs and ranking members, known as the “four corners” of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees, will likely meet shortly after the coming recess. The goal is to set topline spending amounts. Rumor has the HAC aiming to conduct subcommittee markups from June 13 to 22, and full committee markups from June 22 to 30, allowing for potential passage of appropriations bills in the full House before the August recess.

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Another major topic of discussion will be how to handle Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care expenditures, which are growing rapidly. The White House has floated the idea of splitting this into its own spending category, independent of defense and non-defense discretionary spending. Doing so would remove this from spending caps, lessening the impact of this expanding part of the budget upon the rest of the Executive Branch accounts. The idea is being met with skepticism on the Hill. When asked about it, Senate Appropriations Committee ranking member Sen. Shelby (R-AL) told reporters: “no, no, no.”

The nomination of Mr. Erik Raven to be Under Secretary of the Navy and the Honorable William LaPlante to be Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment were reported out of the Senate Armed Services Committee to the full Senate on Tuesday. Today, LaPlante was confirmed by the full Senate by voice vote.

Rep. Fred Upton (R-MI) announced he will not run for re-election.

### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS’ AFFAIRS ADVANCES 17 BIPARTISAN BILLS TO SUPPORT VETERANS

On Wednesday, the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs held a [full Committee Markup](#) and advanced 17 bills with strong bipartisan support. These bills will help ensure VA can meet the needs of women veterans, provide additional training for peer support specialists and help improve VA’s communication with survivors of Military Sexual Trauma, expand entrepreneurship opportunities for veterans, assist student veterans, improve training and oversight tools for VA’s Office of Inspector General, and develop a more diverse workforce to serve the needs of all veterans. See all bill text from Wednesday’s markup [here](#).

A full list of the bills that passed the House can be found below:

- [H.R. 7393](#) – The Improving VA Workforce through Minority Serving Institutions Act of 2022
- [H.R. 6961](#), as amended – The Dignity for MST Survivors Act
- A.N.S. offered by Rep. Takano (D-CA) to [H.R. 2724](#), as amended – VA Peer Support Enhancement for MST Survivors Act
- [H.R. 6052](#) – Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General Training Act of 2021
- A.N.S. offered by Rep. Pappas (D-NH) to [H.R. 7277](#) – Improving Oversight of VA Community Care Providers Act of 2022
- [H.R. 2428](#) – Strengthening Oversight for Veterans Act of 2021
- [H.R. 7369](#) – Veteran Eligibility for Necessities To Undertake Rewarding Entrepreneurship (VENTURE) Act
- A.N.S. offered by Rep. Takano (D-CA) to [H.R. 6376](#), as amended – Student Veteran Work Study Modernization Act

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- [H.R. 7375](#) – To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to update the payment system of the Department of Veterans Affairs to allow for electronic fund transfer of educational assistance, administered by the Secretary, to a foreign institution of higher education
- [H.R. 5738](#), as amended – Lactation Spaces for Veteran Moms Act
- [H.R. 7335](#) – Improving Military Sexual Trauma (MST) Claims Coordination Act
- [H.R. 2326](#) – Veterans Cyber Risk Awareness Act
- [H.R. 7158](#) – Long-Term Care Veterans Choice Act
- [H.R. 5754](#) – Patient Advocate Tracker Act
- [H.R. 6064](#) – To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to seek to enter into an agreement with the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine for a review of examinations, furnished by the Secretary, to individuals who submit claims to the Secretary for compensation under chapter 11 of title 38, United States Code, for mental and physical conditions linked to MST
- A.N.S. offered by Rep. Bost (R-IL) to [H.R. 7153](#) – Department of Veterans Affairs Principles of Benefits Automation Act
- A.N.S. offered by Rep. Bost (R-IL) to [H.R. 6604](#) – VETS Credit Act

### ROUNDTABLE TO DISCUSS VA DENTAL CARE

The Senate Veterans Affairs Committee (SVAC) held a roundtable (which is slightly less formal than a hearing) to discuss VA’s dental benefit. Currently, only a small portion of the veterans population is eligible to receive dental care from the VA. At this event, veterans service organizations (VSOs), VA representatives, and Senators discussed the benefits of expanding eligibility and increasing research in this area. American Legion Legislative Director Lawrence Montreuil pointed out that “proper oral health is a necessity to achieving whole health.” Events such as this often serve as a starting point for future legislation.

### UPCOMING HEARINGS

Congress is out of session next week and there will be no hearings.

### MEETINGS

- On Monday, April 4, NLD Staff participated in a weekly VSO meeting to discuss the Honoring Our Pact Act.
- On Tuesday, April 5, NLD Staff participated in a VSO Caretaker working group to discuss legislative solutions for the problems affecting caretakers and the VA.
- On Tuesday, April 5, NLD Staff participated in a Burn Pits Advisory Group meeting to discuss strategies to pass the Honoring Our PACT Act in the Senate. The Honoring Our PACT Act is comprehensive toxic exposure legislation that addresses health care, the presumption of service-connection, research, resources, and other matters related to veterans who were exposed to toxic substances during military service.

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- On Tuesday, April 5, NLD Staff participated in a Burn Pits VSO meeting to discuss changes in the bill text of the Honoring Our PACT Act.
- On Tuesday, April 5, NLD Staff monitored a House Armed Services Hearing Committee (HASC) hearing where lawmakers discussed the President's FY23 Defense Budget request with Department of Defense (DoD) officials.
- On Tuesday, April 5, NLD Staff met with the American Institute of Dental Public Health (AIDPH) to discuss S. 3017 – the Veterans Dental Care Eligibility Expansion and Enhancement Act, which was introduced by Sen. Sanders (I-VT).
- On Tuesday, April 5, NLD Staff attended a four corners Congressional meeting to the of University of Arizona's suspension from the GI Bill and what resources could be provided to affected students.
- On Wednesday, April 6, NLD Staff met with Majority Leader Schumer's (D-NY) staff to discuss advocacy strategies to pass comprehensive toxic exposure legislation.
- On Wednesday, April 6, NLD Staff monitored a Senate Armed Services Subcommittee on Personnel hearing on DOD suicide prevention.
- On Wednesday, April 6, NLD Staff monitored a House Veterans Affairs Committee (HVAC) hearing markup.
- On Wednesday, April 6, NLD Staff met with HVAC Majority staff to discuss predatory claims companies that charge contingency fees for VA service-connected disability claims consulting.
- On Wednesday, April 6, NLD Staff participated in a roundtable with the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee (SVAC) to discuss legislation that would expand dental care services in VA.
- On Thursday, April 7, NLD Staff met with Sen. Murkowski's (R-AK) veterans policy team to discuss the Honoring Our PACT Act.
- On Thursday, April 7, NLD Staff met with Chairwoman Luria's (D-VA) veterans policy team to discuss the Health Care Fairness for Military Families Act. This bill would seek to improve Tricare by allowing adult children to stay on health insurance plans up to the age of 26, which is akin to private-sector health insurance policies.
- On Thursday, April 7, NLD Staff met with Sen. Marshall's (R-KS) veterans policy team to discuss the Honoring Our PACT Act.
- On Thursday, April 7, NLD Staff participated in an SVAC Majority and VSO meeting to discuss the cost and implementation of the Honoring Our PACT Act.
- On Thursday, April 7, NLD Staff met with the Wounded Warrior Project's Government Affairs team to discuss legislative solutions for problems affecting caretakers and the VA.
- On Thursday, April 7, NLD Staff attended a Hill Vets alumni dinner.
- On Thursday, April 7, NLD Staff met with minority staff from the House Small Business Committee to discuss access to capital for veteran-owned small businesses.
- On Friday, April 8, NLD Staff participated in a VSO meeting to discuss the Honoring Our PACT Act and legislative strategies for passing it in the Senate.
- On Friday, April 8, NLD Staff met with Majority Leader Schumer's (D-NY) staff to discuss legislative strategies to pass the Honoring Our PACT Act in the Senate.
- On Friday, April 8, NLD Staff met with the American Society of Anesthesiologists to discuss anesthesia safety in the VA.
- On Friday, April 8, NLD staff met with HVAC minority staff to discuss H.R. 7074 - the Quality Education for Veterans Act, which was introduced by Rep. Moore (R-AL).

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- On Friday, April 8, NLD staff met with VA to discuss updates to the University of Arizona suspension.

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