

National Legislative Division Weekly

THE AMERICAN LEGION HOSTS ANNUAL HOLIDAY RECEPTION



Chairman Takano (D-CA) delivers remarks at The American Legion holiday reception.

On Wednesday, December 7, The American Legion and With Honor hosted its annual holiday reception in Washington, DC. The event attendees included several Members of Congress, Congressional staffers, fellow veteran services organizations (VSOs), and other members of the veteran and defense community. The Members of Congress who attended include Chairman Takano of the House Veterans Affairs Committee (D-CA), Rep. Golden (D-ME), Rep. Bacon (R-NE), and Rep. Moulton (D-MA).

All of the members delivered remarks and praised The American Legion's legislative accomplishments in Congress this year. Rep. Golden and Rep. Bacon, who co-chair the For Country Caucus, also stressed the importance of having veterans elected to Congress to ensure veteran issues are better-represented and understood at the federal level.



Rep. Bacon (R-NE) delivers remarks at The American Legion holiday reception.



Rep. Moulton (D-MA) delivers remarks at The American Legion holiday reception.



Rep. Golden (D-ME) delivers remarks at The American Legion holiday reception.

National Legislative Division Weekly

CONGRESS

Thursday afternoon, the House passed the FY23 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) on a 350-80 vote. Forty-five Democrats and 35 Republicans voted against the bill.

As one of the last big pieces of legislation likely to see action this Congress, lawmakers tried to attach a number of provisions to the bill. None made it through negotiations. That is not stopping Sen. Manchin (D-WV) from calling on his colleagues to add his energy permitting provisions next week.

The House vote on the NDAA was briefly held up by some members of the Congressional Black Caucus calling for the addition of voting rights legislation on Wednesday. House leadership side-stepped this demand, but the final vote on Thursday ended up occurring under rules requiring it to get 2/3 of Members to vote in favor, rather than a simple majority. That did not prove to be a problem.

In the Senate, Democrats now have a 51-49 majority after Sen. Warnock (D-GA) won his run-off election Tuesday night. The midterm elections are now officially over.

VETERAN SERVICE RECOGNITION ACT PASSES THE HOUSE

Deported veterans would have an easier path to returning to the United States, and non-citizen service members would have earlier opportunities to apply for naturalization under a bill passed Tuesday by the House.

The bill, called the Veteran Service Recognition Act, would also add more hurdles to deporting non-citizen veterans. It cleared the House in a largely party-line 220-208 vote.

The bill still needs to pass the Senate in order to become law, an unlikely prospect with just a couple weeks left in this congressional session and Republicans holding enough seats in the upper chamber to block bills they oppose. In passing the bill Tuesday, House Democrats used the last days of their majority to send a message on an issue they've been pushing since the Trump administration.

Non-citizens are eligible for expedited citizenship if they serve honorably in the U.S. military. But advocates charge that defense and immigration officials put up too many hurdles in the process and don't do enough to inform immigrant service members of their eligibility.

“Men and women who served honorably should not face barriers to citizenship or face deportation from the country they served or fought to defend,” the American Legion said in written testimony to the House earlier this year in support of the bill. “It is only right that we recognize their service with the pathways to citizenship they deserve.”

National Legislative Division Weekly

Under the bill approved by the House, non-citizen service members would have to be afforded the opportunity to apply for naturalization as soon as their first day of service. The bill would also call on the Pentagon to have a Citizenship and Immigration Services employee or someone else trained in immigration law stationed at each military entrance processing station to ensure non-citizen recruits have information on naturalization opportunities.

In addition, the bill would allow deported veterans to apply to become legal permanent residents of the United States if they have not been convicted of a serious crime.

And it would create a "Military Family Immigration Advisory Committee" at the Department of Homeland Security to review cases of veterans and their family members facing deportation and make recommendations, based in part on their military record, on whether they should be allowed to stay in the country.

A couple hundred veterans could be affected by the bill, Takano said.

Original Article: [Bill to Help Deported Veterans and Non-Citizen Troops Clears House](#) (Military.com)

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.

Randy Edwards, Utah

This week, we are excited to recognize Randy Edwards from the Department of Utah for meeting with the offices of Sen. Lee (R-UT), Sen. Romney (R-UT), and Rep. Curtis (R-UT). Mr. Edwards discussed GI Bill benefits for Guard and Reserve with the staffers.

Thank you, Mr. Edwards!

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, December 13, the House Veterans' Affairs Committee (HVAC) will hold a hearing titled "Review of the Role of VA's Fourth Mission and Pandemic Response."

National Legislative Division Weekly

- On Wednesday, December 14, the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Health will hold a hearing titled "Reviewing the Program of Comprehensive Assistance to Family Caregivers."
- On Wednesday, December 14, the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Technology Modernization will hold a hearing titled "Protecting the Privacy of Veterans' Data."
- On Wednesday, December 14, HVAC will hold a hearing titled "Legislative Hearing on: Discussion Draft, the VA Housing Loan Forever Act of 2022."