



June 19, 2026

WEEKLY GRASSROOTS NEWSLETTER

On June 19, 1865, freedom finally reached Texas, two and a half years after it was promised. We honor it as Juneteenth through the enduring legacy of Black servicemembers who have defended our nation throughout every era of American history. From the battlefields of the Civil War to the conflicts of today, their service, sacrifice, and patriotism have helped shape a stronger and more united America.

STAY INFORMED: LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES NOW AVAILABLE

Want to see the issues Legionnaires are discussing with lawmakers? The 119th Congress, 2nd Session Legislative Priorities materials are available now.

View and download them on the Legion website [here](#).

JUNETEENTH: A BLACK VETERAN'S PERSPECTIVE ON FREEDOM'S LEGACY

This article's original publication can be found [here](#)

Juneteenth stands as one of the most significant milestones in American history—a day that marks the long-overdue enforcement of the Emancipation Proclamation in Texas, ensuring the freedom of enslaved African Americans. It's a

day of celebration, reflection, and continued commitment to justice. For Black Veterans, Juneteenth carries an even deeper meaning, connecting the legacy of service and sacrifice to the hard-fought promise of freedom.

Freedom's Eve: A moment of hope and determination

The roots of Juneteenth are intertwined with another powerful moment in Black history—[Freedom's Eve](#), the night before Jan. 1, 1863. As enslaved and free African Americans gathered in churches and homes, they awaited news of President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation taking effect. While the proclamation declared enslaved people in Confederate states free, its enforcement required continued struggle, including military intervention.

Black men and women understood that freedom would not arrive on paper alone—it had to be protected and defended. From the very beginning, Black service members played a vital role in securing that promise—from the Union Army's Colored Troops to every generation that followed, standing in defense of a country that was still reckoning with its own contradictions.

Juneteenth and Black military service: A legacy of dedication

More than two years after Freedom's Eve, Union General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, Texas, on June 19, 1865, and issued [General Order No. 3](#), officially declaring that all enslaved people in Texas were free. This historic moment not only marked the symbolic end of legal slavery in the U.S. but also reinforced the truth that freedom required action, not just words.

For Black Veterans, this historical journey is a personal one. Black soldiers and sailors served in every conflict, often facing discrimination within the very institutions they fought to defend. From the Buffalo Soldiers to the Tuskegee Airmen, the valor and perseverance of Black service members have shaped the nation's defense. Even today, Black military personnel continue to serve honorably, carrying the weight of a legacy that began with the fight for emancipation itself.

The responsibility of remembrance

Juneteenth is not just a day of celebration—it's a day to remember the price of freedom and the ongoing work needed to preserve it. For Black Veterans, it is a

moment to reflect on the sacrifices of those who paved the way, recognizing that military service has always been at the tip of the spear.

As we honor Juneteenth, we must also acknowledge that freedom is never guaranteed—it is protected through vigilance, service and a commitment to justice. Black Veterans, past and present, embody that commitment, standing as a testament to the resilience of a people who fought for their country even when their country did not fully fight for them.

Today, as we celebrate Juneteenth with loved ones, and continue educating future generations, we reaffirm the promise made on Freedom's Eve: We will always stand in defense of liberty, dignity and the right to live as truly free people.

IN THE NEWS

ARMY REDUCES PCS MOVES TO BOOST READINESS AND FAMILY STABILITY

This article's original publication can be found [here](#)

The Army is significantly reducing scheduled Permanent Change of Station moves — cutting more than 12,000 relocations in FY26 and over 13,600 in FY27. Driven by targeted Human Resource Continuous Transformation initiatives, this shift will keep warfighting formations intact longer. By stabilizing these units, the Army aims to build more lethal, cohesive teams, boost overall readiness, and provide much-needed predictability for Soldiers and their families.

“Our intentions with the HR Continuous Transformation initiative are to change the system to be for a more adaptive and agile approach to HR. This includes introducing incentives for stabilization to reduce unnecessary moves that ultimately increases our warfighting capabilities,” stated Brig. Gen. Gregory Johnson, Director of Military Personnel Management, Headquarters Department of the Army G1.

Soldiers are presented with two options to assist their decision to stabilize. The Stabilization Retention Option, which enabled approximately 6,200 Soldiers to remain at their duty station in fiscal year 2025, gives Soldiers more control over

their careers. The Army is also prioritizing family needs with its popular High School Stabilization program. Having benefited approximately 4,000 Soldiers in the past year, this program allows families to stay at one duty station through a child's senior year.

Human Resource Continuous Transformation is an effort to review all processes to include the systems that have traditionally required frequent permanent change of station moves. The Army is undertaking a broad review of Professional Military Education including the Captains Career Course and Intermediate Level Education to find ways to reduce PCS requirements. The effort emphasizes expanding distance learning options and using Temporary duty and return attendance models so Soldiers can complete these courses without having to relocate. This shift is extending to other training programs as well. By stabilizing Soldiers for two years while they attend these courses, the Army has already avoided more than 5,000 school-related PCS moves in fiscal year 2025.

Pilots like the Armor Crewman MOS (19K) stabilization at Fort Riley and Fort Bliss offer bonuses for tankers to remain at their current location. Programs for company-grade officers, like the Company Grade Retention Incentive Program and warrant officers through their Warrant Officer Retention & Excellence Program provide similar options to reduce mid-tour churn.

“The goal of our strategy is to solve one of the biggest challenges to readiness and retention, which is instability,” stated Sgt. Maj. Enrique Rose, Senior Army Career Counselor, Army G-1. “The efforts focus on empowering Soldiers to choose what is best for their families while not compromising readiness.”

By eliminating some PCS moves to facilitate stability, team development, and readiness, the Army is signaling a clear commitment to its people without compromising lethality. This is more than a cost-saving measure, it is a direct investment in the well-being of the force. The Army is building a more modern, people-focused personnel system where Soldiers can build expertise, and families can plant deeper roots.

'RIGHT-TO-REPAIR' NDAA PROVISION WANTED BY AMERICANS ACROSS POLITICAL LINES

This article's original publication can be found [here](#)

More than three-quarters of Americans polled in a recent survey endorse national defense legislation that would include the "right-to-repair" provision allowing U.S. military service members to fix their own equipment rather than wait for contractors as required by law.

Right-to-repair has been one of myriad topics discussed, and amendments included, in both the U.S. House and Senate deliberations of the Fiscal Year 2027 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). After the House Armed Services Committee included right-to-repair in its defense bill version, the Senate Armed Services Committee followed suit on Wednesday by voting 18-9 to approve its own \$1.14 trillion version that also includes the right-to-repair reform. Now, the full Senate must deliberate the legislation prior to becoming law.

According to a survey published June 10 by the Specialty Equipment Market Association (SEMA), about 78.9% of all 1,090 respondents said they support the military's ability to repair their own equipment. When asked specifically about the Warrior Right to Repair Act contained within the House and Senate bill versions, roughly 73.5% of respondents said they would support its inclusion in the final version.

That overwhelming support in favor of the provision's inclusion falls along all ideological lanes, with 84.1% of Republicans, 78.2% of Democrats, and 76.2% of independents voicing support for allowing the military to repair its own equipment.

The numbers are quite stark considering that the same survey deemed right-to-repair as a "silent issue," with 76.5% of respondents being unaware of contract rules that restrict military units from repairing their own equipment.

"It's rare to have sort of overwhelming support across all three political segments on an issue," Karen Bailey-Chapman, senior VP of public and government affairs for SEMA, told Military.com. "I think the thing for us is...Americans generally didn't even know that this was a thing, that this was even something that needed to be legislated.

"I think most Americans, especially anybody that's been either in the military or military adjacent, you think, 'Of course the military can repair their vehicles or

their equipment in the field.' And to find out that this is actually not allowed, I think is a little bit shocking to people."

On more granular questions, like if a military vehicle breaks down in a combat zone, 66.5% said that service members should be allowed to repair it in the field. Another 71.8% expressed concern about how defense contracting decisions are made.

Just 10% of respondents believe military units should be required to wait for manufacturer-authorized technicians.

The survey was commissioned from May 14 to 17 and has a +/- 2.9% margin of error.

PREVIOUS CONGRESSIONAL RIGHT-TO REPAIR EFFORTS FELL SHORT

Current law allows for contracts that often force the military's highly capable service members to rely on contracting personnel to repair equipment.

In turn, critics have blasted such ways of doing business by pointing at exorbitant costs, defense contractors leveraging the U.S. military to benefit their own coffers and contracts, and U.S. taxpayer dollars not being properly utilized.

The impetus for the SEMA poll, Bailey-Chapman explained, is that arguably the majority of Americans are unaware of what right-to-repair is and does as it relates to the military. But efforts to delve into the data began about a year ago, around the same time that the provision was ultimately cut from both the House and Senate versions of the Fiscal Year 2026 NDAA.

"We're trying to kind of bridge that gap...this is a common-sense piece of legislation, and thankfully now it is in both the House and Senate versions that are going to be advancing to the respective floors," she said. "But I think there's sort of this disconnect of the fact that No. 1, the military wants it. You had the head of the Army Special Ops on Capitol Hill asking for this, and then you've got from our perspective, the small businesses and small business manufacturers who have been trying to sort of have the ability to serve our military and supply our military.

"Quite frankly, the big military contractors have been largely keeping us out. It was a common sense measure last year, it was taken out by people that have their own interests—the large defense contractors—and so when this effort spun up again, we decided to double down on the effort."

She mentioned how support for right-to-repair's inclusion has been strongly encouraged by major U.S. military officials. Army Secretary Daniel Driscoll testifying before the Senate Armed Services Committee in May 2026, calling right-to-repair “one of the most important things, and I don’t say this to be over the top.”

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth has endorsed it to the benefit of service members.

And while this particular SEMA survey did not ask respondents their views on if right-to-repair again fails to make the final cut of the NDAA, Bailey-Chapman said you can glean how many Americans would feel based on their other responses.

"You can look at the opposite reaction, that if once again the large contractors find a way to pull this out despite the overwhelming support in Congress, the support of the American people, support of the actual military, the ones that are serving on our behalf—it could very well become a major issue for those that maybe don't choose to support it or protect this provision," she said.

40 VETERANS SHARE STORIES OF MILITARY SERVICE, SACRIFICE AND DISCRIMINATION ACROSS 7 CITIES

This article’s original publication can be found [here](#)

SHARING STORIES HELP VETERANS CONNECT WITH CIVILIANS, LEADING TO HEALING, EMPATHY.

Despite making up about [31-43% of all active-duty service members](#) in the U.S. military, minority personnel often feel underrepresented and overlooked.

However, through a spoken word series, [“Stories, Our Truth: A National Tour Honoring the Legacy of Us,”](#) minority veterans are getting an opportunity to share deeply emotional, thought-provoking stories that prove to be therapeutic and healing.

The series, a collaboration between Minority Veterans of America (MVA) and The Chamberlain Network (TCN), kicked off in April in Chicago, featuring transgender

veterans. The second tour stop was in New York City, highlighting stories of Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders who served.

The group's next event, slated for June 20 at the Baltimore War Memorial, will honor Black and African American veterans and will be emceed by KeSean "Sean Black" Johnson, an Army veteran.

The storytelling series runs through September with shows in Richmond, Seattle and San Antonio set for July, August and September. By the end of the tour, the series will have featured about 40 veterans sharing stories in seven cities with at least six storytellers taking the stage at each show.

Lindsay Church, executive director and co-founder of MVA, said the organization started the series in 2019 in Richmond, Va.

"We brought together LGBTQ+ service members and veterans to share their experiences serving under discriminatory policies and to reflect on how those policies shaped their lives long after they left the military," Church told Military.com. "Since then, we've hosted storytelling events both in person and virtually that have highlighted the experiences of veterans across race, gender, sexual orientation, religion and other identities. At their core, these events have always been about creating space for people to tell their own stories in their own words."

Late last year, MVA teamed with TCN, a group focused on preserving democracy through veteran leadership, to expand the series nationally. Since early 2025, federal policies have shifted to attempt to ban transgender service members from the military and curb healthcare for LGBTQ+ veterans. Church felt it was time to act.

"At a moment when many communities are seeing their histories erased, politicized, or pushed to the margins, we felt an urgency to create spaces where veterans could speak honestly about their lives and experiences," Church said. "This tour is about preserving those stories and creating opportunities for connection. At a time when people are being told they don't belong or that their experiences don't matter, we're creating space to listen to one another and to recognize that these stories are part of our shared history."

Church said storytelling builds connection, not just with other veterans but with civilians seeking a better understanding of military life.

“In a moment when conversations about identity, patriotism and belonging are often reduced to political talking points, storytelling creates an opportunity for something more human,” Church said. “It allows people to move beyond assumptions and connect with experiences they may never have encountered otherwise. People often tell us that they saw themselves in a story, learned something they didn’t know, or connected with an experience that challenged their assumptions. We’ve seen tears, laughter, moments of reflection and conversations that continue long after the event.”

Veterans who’ve told their stories to an audience of mostly strangers have left the experience feeling less alone, Church said, which is the most impactful part of the event for her.

“Whether they’re the ones on stage or sitting in the audience, they’re reminded that their experiences matter and that they’re part of something larger than themselves,” Church said.

Share Experiences Together

As a woman of color and a gay veteran, Keturah Johnson felt isolated at times while serving in the Army National Guard in Pennsylvania.

Realizing she would likely face some discrimination in the military, she joined anyway, feeling it was a worthy challenge. Johnson, a combat veteran, served from 2009-2015. She currently works in the aviation industry.

Military life has rough patches for most veterans, but the scrutiny Johnson faced was even more intense.

“Sometimes you were seen, and sometimes you were not. The discrimination I experienced was not always straightforward or directed at me individually, though it was always evident,” Johnson told Military.com. “A lot of the aggression I came across was negative, generalized comments about entire communities, people of color, women, or LGBTQ+ folks that were different from the stereotypical archetype of a service member or veteran.”

Johnson said she joined the storytelling tour because representation matters, especially in a time when she feels society can cure some of its ills through connection and active listening.

“We need to share lived experience with each other,” she said.

When Johnson's on stage, she experiences gratitude for a receptive audience, but also feels "anger, joy, nervousness and peace all at once."

DID YOU KNOW

VA WARNS OF POSTCARD SCAM TARGETING VETERANS

This article's original publication can be found [here](#)

POSTCARDS SENT TO VETERANS CLAIM ENTITLEMENT TO EXTRA VA BENEFITS OR ADDITIONAL PAYMENTS.

The Department of Veterans Affairs [sent a release](#) to make veterans aware of a new postcard scam. Fraudulent postcards are being sent claiming that you, or your spouse, are entitled to "extra VA benefits" or additional payments, including CHAMPVA, TRICARE and dental coverage, regardless of a VA disability rating. The VA stresses not to fall for it.

These scammers claim to be affiliated with VA, and they might instill a sense of urgency, pressuring you to contact them as soon as possible, or within five days. Their goal is to get you to call the number provided. Once you do, they will often use flattery and praise regarding your military service to gain trust. The scammer will attempt to obtain personal identifying information like your Social Security Number, bank account details or other sensitive information.

Never give this information over the phone or on the internet.

VA is monitoring the situation and urges you to remain vigilant against these fraudulent attempts to steal personal identifying information.

The VA encourages you to:

- Refuse to engage.
- Do not call unverified numbers.

- Hang up immediately if you are contacted by unsolicited numbers.

If you miss a VA benefits payment, notice a discrepancy, or suspect suspicious activity with your direct deposit, contact VA right away at 1-800-827-1000.

If you suspect you have experienced fraud, you can find out more and report to the appropriate agency at [VSAFE.gov](https://www.vsafe.gov) or by calling 1-833-38V-SAFE.

The VA shared the following common scam tactics:

Unsolicited postcards, emails, texts or social media messages: Scammers will send communication claiming you qualify for extra VA benefits.

Fake authority on calls or emails: Scammers may pretend to be VA officials and claim there's a problem with your benefits or account.

Phishing attacks: Scammers may send emails or text messages that appear legitimate but are designed to steal personal information through malicious links or attachments.

Payment requests: Scammers might demand payment using unconventional and untraceable payment methods, such as gift cards, wire transfers, bitcoin or prepaid debit cards.

Social media interactions: Scammers may try to build trust through social media messages or friend requests, only to exploit that trust for their own financial gain.

To protect yourself:

Never share any personal or financial information with unverified contacts.

Don't act on urgent requests from people you don't know. Legitimate VA communications will not pressure you to respond immediately or provide sensitive information.

If you receive a suspicious postcard, email, text or call, do not call the number provided or click on any links.

Always verify the sender's identity; when in doubt, call VA directly at 1-800-827-1000.

Be cautious on social media. Ignore friend requests or messages from people you don't know or recognize.

AMERICA250 OFFICIALLY SEALS ‘AMERICA’S TIME CAPSULE’ AHEAD OF JULY 4 BURIAL IN PHILADELPHIA

This article’s original publication can be found [here](#)

FIELD TRIP WINNERS ANNOUNCED, BLOCK PARTY CONCERT ACTS ANNOUNCED.

America250 – the national, nonpartisan organization charged by Congress with leading the celebration of the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence – has announced that “America’s Time Capsule” has been officially sealed and revealed the [full collection](#) of items that will be preserved inside the capsule for the next 250 years.

The collection includes letters, artifacts, records and objects selected to help tell the story of the United States at the semiquincentennial. Some content was selected by America250 to represent its national programming, but the majority is from the 50 states, D.C. and territories. America250 worked closely with each to establish their own commissions that determined which items should represent them, making this a truly grassroots effort. Most contents will be placed within 6” x 4” x 2” archival boxes. Paper documents will be preserved within a separate compartment inside the capsule. Contributions range from handwritten letters and civic records to cultural artifacts, scientific innovations, sports memorabilia and items representing the everyday life of Americans across the country.

America’s Field Trip: America250 has announced the 2026 [America’s Field Trip](#) awardees – “an inspiring group of 250 young people whose writing and artwork captured the creativity, curiosity and civic spirit that will help shape our nation’s next 250 years. These students shared powerful reflections on community, opportunity, perseverance, service, freedom and the many experiences that connect us as Americans.”

This summer, the 125 first-place awardees will embark on unforgettable field-trip experiences to some of the country’s most iconic historic and cultural destinations, including Yellowstone National Park, the Kennedy Space Center, the National Archives, the Golden Gate Bridge, the Library of Congress, the Mount Rushmore National Memorial and more.

America’s Block Party Concert Benefiting Giving 4th: Chris Stapleton and the Smashing Pumpkins will take the stage for [America’s Block Party](#) at the Los

Angeles Memorial Coliseum on July 4, hosted by Queen Latifah. Additional performers will be announced in the coming weeks. The landmark concert will celebrate [Giving 4th](#), America250's new national initiative calling on all Americans to add something new to their celebration: the act of giving back through pledges for charitable donations.

America250 is hosting the concert as the Los Angeles anchor of a nationwide, sea-to-shining-sea celebration and a unifying call for Americans to make a pledge to support a nonprofit or cause they care about, then fulfill that pledge through a charitable donation as the nation celebrates July 4. To ensure measurable impact, America250 will collaborate with GivingTuesday, the global generosity movement, to track charitable donations nationwide. Additional America's Block Party locations include Summerfest in Milwaukee, the Fort Campbell Festival in Kentucky and SC250 Charleston (S.C.), with announcements for celebrations in Boston and Philadelphia coming soon.

Tickets will go on sale on June 16 at 10 a.m. PDT at america250.org/la. Fans can also download the official [America's Block Party app](#) to find a block party near them, access the livestream and participate in Giving 4th. Tickets are priced at \$17.76; 5,000 complimentary tickets will be donated to veterans and active-duty servicemembers in honor of their service. Active-duty military, veterans and first responders can also claim tickets directly through [VetTix](#), a free program dedicated to connecting those who serve with live events.

Read the latest about all of America250's initiatives at america250.org.

By [National Executive Committee resolution](#), American Legion departments and posts are encouraged to connect with their state and local America250 commissions. An online directory is available to contact these commissions at america250.org/our-partners/state-and-territory-commissions. Share your stories of involvement on [Legiontown](#), and send details of your post or department events to magazine@legion.org.

Legionnaire of the Week

To recognize the weekly accomplishments of our Legionnaires, we 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.

Albert Klingele, Department of New York

Albert, thank you for your steadfast advocacy of Legion priorities; we are honored to name you Legionnaire of the Week!

Albert recently attended a veterans roundtable hosted by Nicole Malliotakis. During the discussion, participants reviewed updates on the Brooklyn VA Medical Center and the Staten Island VA Clinic, as well as legislation affecting veterans and servicemembers. Topics included the Major Richard Star Act, GI Bill expansion, the Love Lives On Act, veterans' community care scheduling, and Coast Guard pay.

Thank you, Albert, for your report and for the time you have dedicated to advancing The American Legion's legislative priorities.

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 us at grassroots@legion.org with the details.

TOP STATES FOR GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY THIS WEEK:

Kansas	304
Tennessee	266
Wisconsin	150
Florida	118
West Virginia	71

Register more participants in your Department and help amplify the voice of veterans on Capitol Hill. Maybe your state just might earn a spot-on next week's Letter Board! Register with the link below:

<https://www.votervoices.net/AmericanLegion/Register>

GRASSROOTS INFORMATION

Strengthen advocacy in your state. Encourage members to connect with their elected officials. Find your representatives [here](#).

Grow your post's reach. Not yet registered? Sign up using the [link here](#) and add your voice to the movement

Prepare for your next Capitol Hill meeting. The *10 Tips for a Successful Meeting on Capitol Hill* and the *Legislative Meeting Worksheet* are ready to download on the [the Legislative Advocacy Resources & Toolkit page](#) on The American Legion website.

Get personalized training. Legislative Division staff can deliver Grassroots Training tailored to your department's needs. Reach out at grassroots@legion.org to schedule a session.

Stay informed on key legislation. Track bills and The American Legion's positions anytime in the [Key Legislation section on VoterVoice](#).

Ready to take action? Register for alerts at [votervoices.net/AmericanLegion/Register](https://www.votervoices.net/AmericanLegion/Register)



UPCOMING CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS

As of 6/18, the following hearings are scheduled:

- Tuesday, June 23, 4:15 PM: Senate Armed Services Subcommittee on Airland – Hearings to examine an update on the F-35 aircraft program; to be immediately followed by a closed session in SVC-217.
- Wednesday, June 24, 2:15 PM: House Veterans Affairs Committee Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations Oversight Hearing – Failure at the Front Gate, Examining VA Police and Security Deficiencies
- Wednesday, June 24, 4:00 PM: Senate Veterans Affairs Committee – Hearing to Consider a Pending Nomination
- Thursday, June 25, 9:30 AM: Senate Armed Services Committee – Hearing To consider the nominations of: Honorable Jules W. Hurst III to be Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller); Mr. Richard M. O’Malley to be Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment; Dr. L. Roger Mason, Jr. to be Director of the National Reconnaissance Office; and Dr. Erich D. Hernandez-Baquero to be Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Space Acquisition and Integration

- Thursday, June 25, 2:15 PM: House Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs – Hearing on Pending Legislation

HVAC hearings can be viewed at: [Calendar Home | House Committee on Veterans Affairs](#)

SVAC hearings can be viewed at: [Hearings - U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs](#)

HASC hearings can be viewed at: [Hearings – House Armed Services Committee](#)

SASC hearings can be viewed at: [Hearings – U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services](#)

[View The American Legion Legislative Handbook Here](#)