

National Legislative Division Weekly

CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS PAY TRIBUTE TO HERSHEL “WOODY” WILLIAMS

On Thursday, Congressional leaders participated in a ceremony honoring Chief Warrant Officer Hershel Woodrow Williams, the last living Medal of Honor recipient from WWII.



Hershel "Woody" Williams lies in state at the US Capitol on Thursday, July 15.

At 3:30 p.m., Williams' casket departed the Capitol. Afterward, there was a wreath-laying ceremony at the National Mall. Both ceremonies were [live-streamed on YouTube](#).

The Marine Corps veteran was awarded the nation's highest award for his actions on Iwo Jima. Williams remained in the Marines after the war, serving a total of 20 years, before working for the Veterans Administration for 33 years as a veterans service representative. In 2018, the Huntington VA medical center was

renamed in his honor, and the Navy commissioned a mobile base sea vessel in his name in 2020.

American Legion National Commander Paul E. Dillard called for President Biden to authorize a state funeral for Hershel “Woody” Williams, the last Medal of Honor recipient from World War II to pass away. Williams, a 72-year member of American Legion Post 177 in Barboursville, WV, died June 29. He was 98 years-old.

“Delegates at our national convention in 2018 unanimously [passed a resolution](#) calling for a state funeral to honor the last of these remarkable heroes,” Commander Dillard said. “All Medal of Honor recipients are extraordinary and Woody Williams was particularly special to The American Legion. He was a proud Legionnaire who demonstrated legendary valor at Iwo Jima and then spent a lifetime serving veterans and Gold Star Families. He was a true American hero in every sense of the word. We extend our condolences to his family.”

Legislative Division staff worked with Congress to ensure Woody would be properly honored for his service to this nation.

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CONGRESS

Wednesday night, the House once again approved the SFC Heath Robinson Honoring Our PACT Act and sent it to the Senate. The 342-88 vote shows continued bipartisan support for the legislation, which expands benefits and care for toxic-exposed veterans and service members from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). This version of the bill removes the tax-related provision from the Senate version, which triggered the blue slip issue. The Senate is expected to pass the bill again soon.

The House spent most of Wednesday and Thursday debating and voting on 650 amendments to the FY23 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). Final passage came Thursday evening.

The Senate version of the NDAA could be in trouble. Minority Leader McConnell (R-KY) is threatening to prevent it from moving to the floor because he opposes Democratic efforts to craft a reconciliation bill that would roll back some of the tax provisions favored by the previous Administration. McConnell made the threat in relation to both the NDAA and pending legislation concerning computer chips made in China. Regardless, Senate Majority Leader Schumer (D-NY) started alerting colleagues on Thursday to expect to start work on the chips legislation next week.

The reconciliation bill reportedly includes a deal, brokered by Sen. Manchin (D-WV), to allow Medicare to negotiate for lower prices on certain prescription drugs. The Senator has indicated to some reporters that this may be the only provision that makes it through the entire reconciliation process.

The House Rules Committee will meet Monday afternoon to clear the first FY23 appropriations minibus for full House consideration later in the week. The package contains six spending bills: Military Construction and Veterans Affairs (Milcon); Transportation, Housing and Urban Development (THUD); Agriculture & Rural Development; Energy & Water (E&W) Development; Financial Services and General Government (FSSG); and Interior and the Environment. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is included in the Agriculture bill.

House Appropriations Committee chair Rep. DeLauro (D-CT) hopes to get all of the appropriations bills to the floor this month, before the August recess. However, rumors have started to swirl that this may not happen.

The Senate appropriations process is in trouble, due to a lack of agreement on topline spending levels. As a result, Senate Appropriations Committee chair Sen. Leahy (D-VT) this week announced that the subcommittees will simply draft bills to present to the full Senate, rather than holding routine markups.

Thursday afternoon, Sen. Burr (R-NC) introduced the FDA Simple Reauthorization Act. Burr, who serves as ranking member on the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, is concerned that the FDA user fee legislation reported out of committee contains “anti-innovation policies” and “devastating” drug pricing proposals. His legislation is limited to user fee program reauthorizations, which could make it easier to pass before the existing programs expire in October.

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FY23 NDAA

The House finished its work on the FY23 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) today. Lawmakers made it through all 650 amendments thanks to a late night session Wednesday, with final votes occurring on Thursday.

The final bill, as amended, passed the full House on a 329-101 bipartisan vote.

Many amendments of particular interest to The American Legion passed the House NDAA. This includes amendment 532, which was introduced by Reps. Harder (D-CA) and Fitzpatrick (R-PA). This amendment would expand eligibility for VA health care to include veterans of World War II who are not already covered. The amendment language comes from H.R. 5562: *WWII Veterans Hospital and Medical Eligibility Act*. This legislation was the direct result of Legion Resolution No. 3 (2017): [WWII Veterans Hospital and Medical Eligibility](#) from the Department of Kentucky.

In addition, several amendments passed to either repeal outdated Authorizations for the Use of Military Force (AUMFs), place two-year sunsets on all future military authorizations, or express a Sense of Congress that AUMFs should include sunset provisions. These amendments are consistent with Legion Resolution No. 22 (2020): [Addressing the "Forever War."](#)

Amendment 187, which would authorize the President to award the Medal of Honor to E. Royce Williams for acts of valor beyond the call of duty during the Korean War, also passed the House NDAA. This amendment was supported by American Legion Resolution No. 70 (2017): [Medal of Honor for E. Royce Williams](#).

Additionally, below are some other veteran-related NDAA amendments:

Pfluger (R-TX); Allred (D-TX); Miller-Meeks (R-IA); Meijer (R-MI)	Bi	VA to work with NASEM to study the incidence and mortality of cancer among individuals who served in the Navy, Air Force, or Marine Corps as aviators and aircrew.
McGovern (D-MA); McKinley (R-WV); Pascrell (D-NJ); Fitzpatrick (R-PA); Kirkpatrick (D-AZ)	Bi	Eliminates the VA Asset and Infrastructure Review (AIR) Commission.

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UPCOMING HEARINGS

- On Tuesday, July 19, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee will hold a hearing to consider pending legislation.
- On Wednesday, July 20, the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity will hold a hearing titled "Modernizing Veteran Education in the Shadow of COVID-19. The American Legion will be testifying and you can watch [here](#).
- On Wednesday, July 20, the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee (SVAC) will hold a hearing titled "Hearings to examine the status of VA's electronic health record modernization program."

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The American Legion