

From the Detachment of Texas Commander.

Members of the SAL National Legislative Commission gathered in our nation's capital for the annual Washington Conference, in February, to meet with members of the 119th Congress and discuss issues important to veterans and their families.

There are twenty-four items for Congress to consider. Some of these bills may affect you directly, so please reach out to your congressional representatives and let them know how important these items are to you and others you may know and ask your representatives to support these bills. Getting involved at the local level makes a difference at the national level.

1. **S. 275/HR. 740: VETERANS' ASSURING CRITICAL CARE EXPANSIONS TO SUPPORT SERVICEMEMBERS (ACCESS) ACT OF 2025.** Sen. Jerry Moran (R-KS) and Rep. Mike Bost (R-IL) plus 11 cosponsors. Establishes existing community care access standards as the baseline standard of care for veterans seeking care in the community. Increases access to life-saving treatment programs for veterans with mental health conditions or addiction. Expands the list of criteria VA is required to for determining whether it is in a veteran's best medical interest to refer a veteran to the community.
2. **HR. 530: ACES ACT OF 2025.** Rep. August Pfluger (R-TX) plus 22 cosponsors. Directs the Secretary of the VA to work with the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine to study the prevalence and mortality of cancer among individuals who served as active-duty air crew in the Armed Forces.
3. **HR. 219: IMPROVING MENOPAUSE CARE FOR VETERANS ACT OF 2025.** Rep. Julia Brownley (D-CA) plus 16 cosponsors. Requires the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to study and report on the medical services furnished by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for veterans experiencing menopause stages. The VA must also report to Congress on a strategic plan on these findings.
4. **HR. 680: CARING FOR SURVIVORS ACT.** Rep. Jahana Hayes (D-CT) and Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA). Brings DIC (Dependency and Indemnity Compensation) benefits in line with other federal survivor programs to better support surviving spouses and family members. Increases the DIC for survivors from 43% (\$1,653.07) to 55% (\$2,107.22) of a single 100% disabled veteran's compensation. Military survivors currently receiving DIC will realize an approximate increase of \$454 per month.
5. **HR. 1004/S. 410: LOVE LIVES ON ACT.** Sen. Jerry Moran (R-KS) and Sen. Raphael Warnock (D-GA) plus 24 Senate cosponsors. Allows surviving spouses of military personnel to retain the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) and DIC if they remarry. Surviving military spouses would also be able to regain TRICARE benefits if their new marriage ends in death, divorce, or annulment.
6. **S. XXX: THE GUARD AND RESERVE GI BILL PARITY ACT.** Sen. Jerry Moran (R-KS) and Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) plus X cosponsors. Allow additional federal active-duty service performed by Guardsmen and Reservists under specific duty statuses to count towards their GI Bill eligibility.
7. **HR 980: MODERIZING THE VETERANS ON-CAMPUS EXPERIENCE ACT.** Rep. Derrick Van Orden (R-WI) plus no cosponsors. This legislation seeks to make improvements to the provision of on-campus educational and vocational counseling by the Department of Veterans Affairs.
8. **HR 983: MONTGOMERY GI BILL-SELECTED RESERVES (MGIB-SR) TUITION FAIRNESS ACT.** Rep Derrick Van Orden (R-WI) plus no cosponsors. This legislation is designed to protect veterans' access to in-state tuition rates under Title 10 and Title 38 of The United States Code.
9. **HR 1242: HIRE VETERANS ACT.** Rep. Eli Crane (R-AZ) and Rep. Mike Levin (D-CA) plus no other cosponsors. Establishes a pilot program to identify and refer veterans for potential employment with federal land management agencies.
10. **HR 977: SUPPORT MILITARY FAMILIES ACT.** Rep. Jen Kiggans (R-VA), Rep. Rob Wittman (R-VA), Rep. Mike Rogers (R-AL), and Rep. Eugene Vindman (D-VA) plus no other cosponsors. Designed to permit federal employees who are spouses of members of the Armed Forces to engage in telework and remote work.
11. **HR 1230: AG VETS ACT.** Rep. Derrick Van Orden (R-WI) and Rep. Don Davis (D-NC) plus no other cosponsors. Directs the Secretary of Agriculture to establish a program to enhance farming and ranching opportunities for veterans.

12. **HR 1288/S. 599: DRIVER REIMBURSEMENT INCREASE FOR VETERAN (DRIVE) ACT.** Rep. Julia Brownley (D-CA) and Sen. Peter Welch (D-VT) plus 14 cosponsors. Requires the VA to ensure the beneficiary travel reimbursement rate is at least equal to the GSA reimbursement rate for federal employees. The rate is currently .21 cents less than the GSA rate.
13. **HR 683: COMBAT VETERANS PRE-ENROLLMENT ACT.** Rep. Young Kim (R-CA). Directs the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a pilot program to permit certain members of the Armed Forces to pre-enroll in the system of annual patients enrollment established and operated under section 1705 of Title 38 of The United States Code.
14. **HR XXX: EXPEDITING TEMPORARY RATINGS FOR VETERANS ACT. (PENDING INTRODUCTION).** This bill requires the VA to modify its information technology systems to provide for the automatic processing of claims for temporary disability ratings for specified veterans (i.e., those who have a service-connected disability that requires hospital treatment or observation for a period of more than 21 days).
15. **HR 1286: SIMPLIFYING FORMS FOR VETERANS CLAIMS ACT.** Rep. Robert Bresnahan (R-PA) plus 6 cosponsors. Directs the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to seek to enter into an agreement with a federally funded research and development center for an assessment of forms that the Secretary sends to claimants for benefits under laws administered by the Secretary, and for other purposes.
16. **HR XXX: GOVERNING UNACCREDITED REPRESENTATIVES DEFRAUDING VA BENEFITS ACT. (PENDING REINTRODUCTION).** Rep. Chris Pappas (D-NH). Reinstates criminal penalties for illegal claims processors.
17. **THE FLOWERS FOR FALLEN HEROES ACT (PENDING REINTRODUCTION).** Rep. Ryan Zinke (R-MT). Expands eligibility for headstones and burial receptacles for people who died before November 11, 1998.
18. **THE EXPANDING AMERICA'S NATIONAL CEMETERY ACT (PENDING REINTRODUCTION).** Rep. Lisa McClain (R-MI). Modifies an existing national cemetery to ensure that full military honors are provided as such cemetery.
19. **HR 647: ENSURING VETERANS' FINAL RESTING PLACE ACT.** Rep. Rudy Yakym (R-IN) plus one cosponsor. Authorizes the provision of certain additional burial benefits for individuals for whom an urn or plaque is furnished, and for other purposes.
20. **HR 488: COMBATING CARTELS ON SOCIAL MEDIA ACT OF 2025.** Rep. Juan Ciscomani (R-AZ) and Rep. Chrissy Houlahan (D-PA). (Lobbying for more cosponsors and urging the Committee on Homeland Security to mark-up the legislation). Requires the Secretary of Homeland Security and the Secretary of State to implement a strategy to combat the recruitment of efforts of transnational criminal organizations, such as drug cartels on social media.
21. **HR 656: PROTECTING MILITARY PARENTAL LEAVE EVALUATIONS ACT.** Rep. Stephanie Bice (R-OK) and Rep. Chrissy Houlahan (D-PA). (Lobbying for more cosponsors and urging HASC to mark-up the bill). Bill will improve parental leave for members of the armed services by exempting them from performance evaluations during the period of their leave.
22. **HR XXX: BLUE PACIFIC ACT.** Rep. Ed Case (D-HI) and Delegate James Moylan (R-Guam) plus 10 bipartisan cosponsors. (Pending Review by National Security Division). Bill to create a long-term US strategy and policy for the Pacific Islands.
23. **UNCLOS – UN CONVENTION ON LAW OF THE SEA.** UN treaty governing uses of the oceans from 1994, still pending US Senate ratification. DOD supports ratification for geostrategic advantage in places like South China Sea and the Artic. Navigational rights and deep seabed resources impacted.
24. **NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT (NDAA) FY 2026.** This “must-pass” legislation provides comprehensive funding to Department of Defense program and sets policies for how the money will be spent. The Senate Armed Services Committee has begun informal hearings in preparation for the FY26 NDAA. The goal is to pass NLT December 2025. The American Legion is engaging with our congressional partners on their NDAA “wish-lists.” We continue to advocate for the inclusion of the Major Richard Star Act as well as provisions to increase the lethality of our armed forces, provide advanced shipbuilding, and invest in modernizing our military.