



February 21, 2025

WEEKLY GRASSROOTS NEWSLETTER

This week, we are asking Legionnaires to contact Congress to request support for the *Major Richard Star Act!* This act aims to allow combat-injured veterans to receive both their earned retirement pay and disability compensation without offset. *The American Legion supports this legislation, and we appreciate all the emails you have sent so far. Go to the [Action Center](#) to quickly email a letter of support to your members of Congress.*

Have you had a recent meeting or phone call with your member of Congress? Report your contact today! Click [here](#) to register your Congressional contact and demonstrate the power of The American Legion advocacy in action.

There will be no Grassroots Newsletter next week (Friday, February 28) due to Washington Conference. Newsletters will resume on Friday, March 7

WASHINGTON CONFERENCE IS NEXT WEEK!

February 22-26, 2025 – The American Legion’s 65th Annual Washington Conference will be held at the Washington Hilton Hotel. This conference provides an opportunity for Legionnaires to meet with their respective lawmakers and hear from members of Congress and VA leadership. The National Commander will also address attendees on legislative priorities during the National Commander’s Rally. More details, such as agendas and schedules, will be updated [here](#).

If you have planned a meeting with a Congressman on the Hill during Washington Conference, please send your meeting time, location, and subject matter to grassroots@legion.org.

CHAIRMEN MORAN, BOST LEAD COLLEAGUES IN INTRODUCING LEGISLATION TO RESTORE ACCOUNTABILITY AT VA

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



U.S. Senator Jerry Moran (R-Kan.) – chairman of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs – and Rep. Mike Bost (R-Ill.) – chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs – introduced legislation to strengthen the Department of Veterans Affairs' authority to hold poor-performing employees accountable.

In 2017, Congress passed the *VA Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act* with overwhelming bipartisan support in response to the nationwide VA access crisis that exposed a toxic workforce culture at VA that negatively impacted veterans' care. Passage of this legislation gave VA leaders the ability to break through bureaucratic obstacles to discipline or fire poor-performing employees, providing VA employees a healthier workplace and increasing veterans' trust in VA. The *Restore VA Accountability Act* addresses questionable decisions from the Federal Circuit, the Federal Labor Relations Authority and the Merit Systems Protection Board that rendered the authority in the *VA Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act* unusable for most of the VA workforce.

“While VA employs some of the finest men and women, it only takes a few bad employees to disrupt the culture and service at the VA,” **said Sen. Moran**. “Veterans are best served when VA leaders have the ability to act swiftly to remove bad employees from the VA workforce. This bill would restore the intent of Congress and help make certain that veterans receive the high-quality care and benefits they've earned and VA staff have the healthy workplace they deserve.”

“Over the past two years, we uncovered scandal after scandal of bad middle managers or employees at VA committing wrongdoing. But time and time again, we saw these bad VA employees who don’t have veterans’ best interests at heart, just reshuffled to another part of the agency. That has a direct impact on not only veterans, but the mission of VA and the employees who are trying to do their jobs well,” **said Rep. Bost.** “The intent of Chairman Moran and I’s bill, the *Restore VA Accountability Act*, is to hold that 1% of bad VA employees accountable. President Trump made this message clear during his first administration, but the Biden-Harris administration and liberal courts refused to act and swept accountability under the rug. We’re going to restore the intent of Congress – and President Trump – by bringing accountability back for good, because America’s veterans deserve to know that the employees who are providing them with the care and services they have earned, are the best and the brightest.”

The legislation is cosponsored by Sens. Tommy Tuberville (R-Ala.), Bill Cassidy (R-La.), Marsha Blackburn (R-Tenn.), Jim Banks (R-Ind.), John Boozman (R-Ark.), Tim Sheehy (R-Mont.), Kevin Cramer (R-N.D.), Thom Tillis (R-N.C.), Pete Ricketts (R-Neb.), Rick Scott (R-Fla.), James Risch (R-Idaho) and Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.).

“Taking care of our veterans is a sacred duty,” **said Sen. Tuberville.** “Veterans should have the best medical care in this country, but at times they have had some of the worst. Veterans shouldn’t be waiting in excruciatingly long lines because the VA’s priorities are misplaced. This legislation restores the VA Accountability Act to its full strength by cutting bureaucratic red tape to allow VA leaders to discipline employees who aren’t doing their jobs.”

“Our veterans answered the call to service,” **said Sen. Cassidy.** “I expect employees at the VA to at least answer the phone. We hear too many stories of veterans being failed by the VA. It’s time we hold the VA accountable.”

“Our veterans deserve a Department of Veterans Affairs that works tirelessly on their behalf,” **said Sen. Blackburn.** “The Restore VA Accountability Act ensures that the VA has the authority it needs to hold employees accountable for misconduct or poor performance, reinforcing the trust our veterans place in this agency.”

“This legislation will bring accountability back to the VA by empowering the Secretary to take swift action against underperforming employees,” **said Sen. Banks.** “A clear message will be sent that excellent veteran care will always be a top priority for President Trump. That’s what the men and women who served our country have earned, and that’s what we’re going to deliver.”

“When bad actors within the VA avoid accountability, veterans and their loved ones suffer,” **said Sen. Boozman.** “That is unacceptable and clearly contrary to Congress’ intent to ensure a culture that delivers the highest standards of care. This legislation reasserts our commitment to zero tolerance for poor performance or misconduct among those serving our former servicemembers.”

“As a combat veteran, who is married to a combat veteran, I know how critical it is to reform the VA and honor our commitment to those who have put their lives on the line for our nation,” **said Sen. Sheehy**. “Our government has a solemn responsibility to have our warfighters’ backs both while they are overseas and once they return home, and I am proud to join my colleagues on this important legislation to ensure the VA is actually accountable to America’s veterans.”

“Our nation’s veterans deserve a Department of Veterans Affairs that delivers quality, efficient care, benefits, and services,” **said Sen. Cramer**. “The bureaucracy often stands in the way of its own mission. I joined Senator Moran in introducing the Restore VA Accountability Act to reinstate the tools to hold the bureaucracy and bad actors accountable.”

“Our veterans have put everything on the line and deserve the best care possible,” **said Sen. Rick Scott**. “I am proud to join my colleagues on the Restore VA Accountability Act to make the VA more efficient and accountable, and raise the standard of life-saving, health care. As a Navy veteran myself and the son of a WWII veteran, it is my priority to ensure all veterans are taken care of and I urge my colleagues to support this commonsense legislation.”

The *Restore VA Accountability Act* strengthens accountability by unlocking expedited disciplinary processes for VA employees, ensuring that decisions backed by substantial evidence are upheld on appeal, removing the need for a performance improvement plan before disciplinary action, and aligning accountability processes for poor-performing managers with that of senior executives.

The full text of the legislation can be found [here](#). A one-pager explanation of the bill can be found [here](#).

House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs Chairman Mike Bost (R-Ill.) introduced companion legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives that was cosponsored by 25 members.

Quotes of Support:

“The VFW supports the Restore VA Accountability Act to improve VA's ability to hold employees to the high standards our veterans deserve,” **said Pat Murray, Legislative Director, The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW)**. “We appreciate the efforts by our supporters in Congress to provide the Secretary the authorities needed to ensure accountability remains paramount at VA.”

“The mission of the VA to serve veterans requires an essential bond of trust. And for veterans to trust in the VA, employees and officials need to be held accountable for their actions,” **said Jim Lorraine, President & CEO, America’s Warrior Partnership (AWP)**. “The vast majority of VA employees are tarnished by the small number of

problematic employees that hurt morale and reputation. Congress has been very forward about this issue in a bipartisan manner for many years, and we are thankful for Chairman Moran and Chairman Bost for reintroducing this essential piece of legislation to restore trust in the VA.”

“Amidst a veterans’ mental health and suicide epidemic, the outgoing Biden administration’s leadership at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs failed our nation’s heroes,” **said John Byrnes, Strategic Director, Concerned Veterans for America (CVA)**. “They refused to follow the VA Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act which mandates firing corrupt and incompetent VA employees. Additionally, this VA has intentionally acted as a barrier to veterans trying to access timely and quality health care. Passing the Restore VA Accountability Act of 2025 is a crucial step to ensure VA and its employees are held accountable to the law. On behalf of every veteran who deserves the care they’ve earned, CVA urges Congress to act swiftly and support this accountability legislation; it is a matter of saving veterans’ lives.”

“The American Legion stands behind the efforts of Chairman Bost and Chairman Moran in their multi-session effort to pass the Restore VA Accountability Act,” **said Mario Marquez, Executive Director of Government Affairs, The American Legion**. “This legislation reflects a commitment to ensure the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) upholds the highest standards of accountability and care for our nation’s heroes by providing the Secretary the necessary tools to address poor performance. Our veterans and their families have earned nothing less than exceptional service from the VA. Strengthening disciplinary authority at the VA is paramount to ensuring a VA that serves all veterans with the highest standards. The American Legion remains committed to working with Congress to ensure veterans receive the first-class care that they deserve.”

"SVA strongly supports the Restore VA Accountability Act, which is a critical step forward in ensuring veterans and their families are served with integrity by the Department of Veterans Affairs," **said Jared Lyon, National President & CEO, Student Veterans of America (SVA)**. "By providing clear procedures for addressing poor performance or misconduct while also protecting whistleblowers and due process rights, the bill strikes a necessary balance to uphold the highest standards of service for our nation's veterans. SVA stands firmly in support of these efforts that promote transparency and accountability, and improve the overall effectiveness of the VA."

"The Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) is grateful to Chairman Moran and Chairman Bost for introducing the Restore VA Accountability Act of 2025 to ensure that VA has the needed authority to create and sustain a workforce environment that best serves our veteran community" **said Bonnie Carroll, TAPS President and Founder**. "On behalf of a grateful nation, we owe our Veterans, their Families, Caregivers and Survivors nothing less."

“We owe an incredible debt to those who have sacrificed so much for our freedom. We must absolutely ensure the VA system is accountable and effective,” **said Major**

General (ret.) Frank McGinn, President, National Guard Association of the United States (NGAUS). “We must right wrongs and dismiss bad actors when they are identified. This bill is a positive step in restoring VA accountability and improving services. We are grateful to Chairman Moran and Chairman Bost for continually stepping up to support our nation’s veterans and thank them for these efforts.

CRANE REINTRODUCES BIPARTISAN ‘HIRE VETERANS ACT’ TO FILL CRITICAL LAND MANAGEMENT VACANCIES

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



Last week, Rep. Eli Crane (R-AZ) and Rep. Mike Levin (D-CA) reintroduced the Hire Veterans Act to employ American veterans while strengthening the federal skilled labor force, specifically at the U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, and Bureau of Land Management.

Over the past decade, federal land management agencies have routinely faced staffing shortages, impacting their operational effectiveness. Notably, the U.S. Forest service has struggled to attract and retain staff, compounded by a noticeable gap in the experience and skill sets of candidates, affecting their capacity to address increasing wildfire threats.

The Hire Veterans Act comprehensively strengthens the federal skilled labor pipeline for veterans, streamlining the hiring process for those seeking to protect our natural resources.

Specifically, the bill establishes a five-year pilot program to direct federal land management agencies to conditionally appoint a veteran who has demonstrated the necessary skills and abilities for specific vacant positions at federal land management agencies.

The bill also directs the Office of Personnel Management, in consultation with the Department of Veterans Affairs and federal land management agencies, to submit an annual report to Congress until the termination of the pilot program, on the effectiveness of the program.

Following the devastating wildfires in Los Angeles and dry conditions in Arizona, it's critical that we proactively boost fire mitigation efforts. This common sense approach to expand our workforce directly addresses vulnerabilities in this area.

"As a 13-year veteran of the U.S. Navy, I'm all too familiar with the obstacles servicemen and women face when transitioning to civilian life. I'm also well-aware of the challenges our federal land management agencies currently face, particularly in filling vacancies for firefighters, park rangers, and foresters," said Rep. Crane. "With this bill, Congress has the opportunity to both streamline the employment process for veterans AND better ensure that our natural resources are protected for future generations. I'm grateful to be able to introduce this legislation that serves our veterans while furthering the responsible stewardship of U.S. land."

"Our veterans sacrifice so much for our nation. We have an obligation to ensure that veterans returning to civilian life can get jobs and support their families," said Rep. Levin. "I'm glad to be partnering with Rep. Crane on our bipartisan bill to expand opportunities for veterans and help connect them to jobs in federal land management agencies. I look forward to working with my colleagues to advance this important legislation."

LEGIONNAIRE OF THE WEEK

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.

Robert Dionne Sr., New Hampshire

Robert, for your steadfast advocacy of Legion priorities, we are honored to name you Legionnaires of the Week!

This week, there was a Veteran's Town Hall at Legion Post 2 in Manchester, N.H. that hosted Representative Chris Pappas. They discussed local issues as well as those in the 119th Congress Legislative Agenda. There were 8 Legionnaires, 5 other veterans, and 1 nonveteran in attendance for the nearly hour-long discussion.

Thank you, Robert, for your report and the time you have dedicated to the 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.

GRASSROOTS INFORMATION

Interested in what the Legion is advocating for in Congress on ***The Veteran's Role in Supporting the Military?*** Check out our [information papers](#) in the [Legislative Toolkit](#). This is a great starting point for a conversation with your elected officials!

As part of our ongoing Grassroots efforts, LegDiv staff is available to provide **Grassroots Training** tailored to the hosting Department's needs. If you are interested in hosting a Grassroots training event, please contact grassroots@legion.org or ejohnson@legion.org.

You can find relevant legislation and the Legion's stance on them in the [key legislation section of VoterVoice](#).

Register for Action Alerts today at
<https://www.votervoice.net/AmericanLegion/Register>



UPCOMING CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS

As of 2/21, the following hearings are scheduled:

- Tuesday, February 25, 9:30 am: Senate Armed Services Nomination Hearing -- *“To Consider the Nomination of Mr. Stephen A. Feinberg to be Deputy Secretary of Defense”*
- Tuesday, February 25, 10:00 am: Senate Veterans Affairs Committee Hearing -- *“Legislative Presentation of Disabled American Veterans & Multi VSOs: AMVETS, Vietman Veterans of America, Military Order of the Purple Heart, Blinded Veterans Association, Veterans Education Success, Gold Star Wives of America Inc., and Reserve Organization of America”*
- Wednesday, February 26, 10:00 am: Joint House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committee Hearing -- *“Legislative Presentation of The American Legion & Multi VSOs”*
- Tuesday, March 4, 10:00 am: Joint House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committee VSO Hearing -- *“Legislative Hearing Presentation of the Veterans of Foreign Affairs Wars of the U.S. & Multi VSOs: PVA, IAVA, SVA, TAPS, EDF, NCHV”*

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](#)