



October 4, 2024

WEEKLY GRASSROOTS NEWSLETTER

This week, we are asking Legionnaires to contact Congress to request support for H.R. 7543 – *Guard and Reserve GI Bill Parity Act!* This legislation aims to rectify GI Bill inequality for National Guard and Reserve servicemembers. *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.

The American Legion's legislative agenda for the 2nd Session of the 118th Congress is available online. To review our priorities, you can check out our [Advocacy Toolkit](#).

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

March 2-5, 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 on the website.

A CENTURY LATER, THE HELLO GIRLS RECEIVE RECOGNITION

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

Senate passes Hello Girls Congressional Gold Medal Act to honor women who served in the Army as telephone operators in World War I.

The Senate last week unanimously passed the Hello Girls Congressional Gold Medal Act, a measure to honor the landmark service of the brave women who served in the Army as telephone operators and connected American and French military forces on the front lines of World War I.



This legislation, sponsored by Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Jon Tester, would award the women of the U.S. Army Signal Corps, dubbed the Hello Girls, with the Congressional Gold Medal for their service to the nation and subsequent 60-year fight to be recognized as veterans. The bill now heads to the House of Representatives.

American Legion Legislative Commission Chairman Patricia Harris applauded Tester for his support of the honor for the group of 223 women who were the first female soldiers in the U.S.

"I am incredibly proud of this legislation," said Harris, an Army NCO who served in the modern-day Signal Corps as a secured switchboard operator. "I recognize that the Hello Girls paved the way for us. Women have played instrumental roles in the military throughout our nation's history. Among those were the Hello Girls, despite being told their service did not count afterward. While the Congressional Gold Medal is a major step forward in honoring women's military service, the work is not complete. We look forward to the bill becoming law and the memory of the Hello Girls and their service being honored."

The Legion has long supported the designation, including the passage of [Resolution 110](#) by the National Executive Committee in 2018. More recently, the Legion conducted an email campaign that led to Legionnaires sending more than 21,000 messages to Congress in support of the bill.

Additionally, American Legion staff in Washington, D.C., have worked with members of Congress and allied organizations for months to make sure that the Legion perspective was heard and our support for this measure was known.

HASC DEMANDS ANSWERS ON REPORTS OF FAULTY WELDS KNOWINGLY MADE TO U.S. NAVY VESSELS

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

U.S. Representatives Mike Rogers (R-AL) and Adam Smith (D-WA), Chairman and Ranking Member of the House Armed Services Committee, along with Representatives Trent Kelly (R-MS) and Joe Courtney (D-CT), Chairman and Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Seapower and Projection Forces, sent a letter to Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro calling for swift and fulsome answers regarding reports that faulty welds may have been knowingly made to U.S. Navy submarines and aircraft carriers.

The members wrote: "The safety of our sailors is our top concern, and we must immediately understand any risks associated with the faulty work."

The full text of the letter is below:

Dear Secretary Del Toro,

It is deeply concerning to learn that faulty welds may have been knowingly made to U.S.

Navy submarines and aircraft carriers. The safety of our sailors is our top concern, and we must immediately understand any risks associated with the faulty work. The Department of Defense needs to immediately provide our committee with answers and a plan for how both you and Huntington Ingalls Industries-Newport News (HII-NNS) will protect U.S. Navy vessels against knowingly faulty work. Absolute transparency with Congress is essential. These vessels are critical to U.S. defense – we must ensure that these vessels are protected against any bad actors seeking to put U.S. national security or our service members at risk.

While the U.S. Department of Justice is reportedly investigating, we want to understand the scope of the problem. Therefore, we expect a briefing to be scheduled promptly on this matter and answers to the below questions and requests no later than October 11, 2024.

1. Does the Navy fully understand the extent of all knowingly faulty welds made by workers at HII-NNS on in-service vessels and vessels under construction?
2. Provide an assessment of any knowingly faulty welds by workers at HII-NNS that pose a threat to sailor safety made on currently in-service vessels.
3. Provide all known impacts to in-service and under construction vessels impacted by knowingly faulty welds by workers at HII-NNS.
4. Provide a recovery plan for in-service and under construction vessels impacted by knowingly faulty welds by workers at HII-NNS.
5. Provide rework plans for in-service and under construction vessels impacted by knowingly faulty welds by workers at HII-NNS.
6. Provide a detailed timeline of when the Navy knew about knowingly faulty welds by HII-NNS.

The Armed Services Committee, under Rule X, clause 1 of the Rules of the House of Representatives (House Rules), maintains oversight jurisdiction over the Department of Defense generally. Moreover, under the House Rules, the Armed Services Committee derives its authority to conduct oversight from, among other things, clause 2(b)(1) of Rule X (relating to general oversight responsibilities), clause 3(b) of Rule X (relating to special oversight functions), and clause 1(b) of rule XI (relating to investigations and studies).

THIS WEEK ON CAPITOL HILL

This week, S. 656 (Veteran Improvement Commercial Driver License Act of 2023) made its way up to the President and passed, meaning it is now law! This Bill amended title 38, United States Code, to revise the rules for approval by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs of commercial driver education programs for purposes of veterans educational assistance, and for other purposes.

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.

Jesse Figueroa, New York

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

This week, Jesse had a meeting with Representative Nicole Malliotakis. They discussed legislative priorities including increased and enhanced accessibility measures for veterans.

Thank you, Jesse, 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.

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



UPCOMING CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS

As of 9:00 am on Friday, October 4, there are NO hearings scheduled.

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](#)

