

National Legislative Division Weekly

GRASSROOTS ALERT: CALL ON CONGRESS TO SAVE THE TROOPS TO TEACHERS PROGRAM

This Thursday, The American Legion Legion National Headquarters sent out an alert to NLC members and Legislative Action Center subscribers to call on their legislators to reauthorize the Troops to Teachers program in the 2022 National Defense Authorization Act. Additional media stories on the programs termination were placed in the [Military Times](#) and [Coffee or Die](#), with more coverage expected next week. All Legionnaires are encouraged to contact their legislators, and share any program testimonials with Legion staff for further highlighting.

TAKE ACTION NOW

CONGRESSIONAL UPDATE

The House returned from recess Tuesday to pass the debt ceiling hike that the Senate passed last week. This measure only kicks the can down the road to the beginning of December.

That sets up the rest of October and all of November to be stressful, as the House and Senate face multiple deadlines, not the least of which is passing a budget to keep the government operating past the December 3 date when the continuing resolution expires, and once again dealing with the debt limit.

House Budget Committee chair Rep. Yarmuth (D-KY) on Tuesday announced he will not run for another term. In a social media video, Yarmuth said he wants “to have more control of my time in the years I have left,” including spending time with his family. Yarmuth will be 75 at the end of his current term.

EXTREMISM AND VETERANS

Experts told the House Veterans Affairs Committee on Wednesday that the participation of even a small number of veterans and service members in extremist organizations could be damaging to the country. The hearing comes after revelations that veterans appear to be disproportionately represented among those identified as having participated in the January 6 attack on the Capitol. Previous studies and hearings have revealed that extremist organizations, including White supremacist groups, actively recruit service members and veterans due to their training with weapons and attack strategies.

The hearing was not without controversy, with some GOP Members charging that Democrats were seeking to criminalize certain political viewpoints. “Free speech must be protected,” announced HVAC ranking member Rep. Bost (R-IL). He did add that “it is another thing altogether” should a person act on their ideals with violence.

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Committee chair Rep. Takano (D-CA) intends to continue holding hearings on the issue. Witnesses and lawmakers at this hearing called upon DoD, the VA, and veterans service organizations to continue investigating the presence of extremism among their memberships, and the ways organizations are targeting their people.

The day after the hearing, Fort Bragg acknowledged the October 6 arrest of James Phillip Mault from New York, who joined the military in May after having participated in the January attack. A Fort Bragg spokesman told Military.com that it is unclear how Mault made it through pre-accession screening. He was identified through social media photos spraying chemical agents at law enforcement officials inside the Capitol building. Mault told the FBI that he was there, but denies assaulting anyone.

KEY LEGISLATION UPDATES

S. 544: Buddy Check Week Act of 2021

Bill Status: 10/07/2021 Passed Senate without amendment by Unanimous Consent

Co-Sponsors: 21

Staff Notes: Now that S.544 has passed the Senate, it is awaiting action in the House Veterans Affairs Committee. NLD staff is communicating with House side committee staff to have S.544 swiftly moved through markup and/or an omnibus end of year bill. American Legion Media Relations will do media outreach on this bill.

S.796: Protecting Moms Who Served Act of 2021

Bill Status: 10/07/2021 Passed Senate without amendment by Unanimous Consent

Cosponsors: 7

Staff Notes: Alongside S.544, this bill was passed via unanimous consent. American Legion Media Relations will do media outreach on this bill.

S. 1040: VA Access for WWII Veterans

Bill Status: Committee on Veterans' Affairs ordered to be reported without amendment favorably 7/28/2021

Co-Sponsors: 10

Staff Notes: On June 23 it was the subject of a SVAC Full Committee Hearing where it received VA support. On July 28 it was ordered to be reported favorably without amendment during an SVAC Full Committee Markup. It is now awaiting scheduling for a vote on the Senate Floor. This month, NLD staff sent a letter to Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and Minority Leader Mitch McConnell requesting S.1040 be expeditiously scheduled on the Senate Floor for a vote.

H.R. 3967: Honoring our PACT Act of 2021

Bill Status: Reported out 14-11 of House Veterans Affairs Committee 6/24/21

Co-Sponsors: 49

Staff Notes: The House Veterans Affairs Committee marked up the Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act of 2021 and the bill was reported out to the full House.

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MEETINGS

- On Monday, October 11, NLD staff submitted a Statement for the Record for the October 13th House Committee on Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Health hearing on pending legislation
- On Tuesday, October 12, NLD staff attended a meeting with House Veterans Affairs Minority to discuss the GI Bill flight school loophole. Committee staff shared that closing the loophole would not net any savings, but that there may be other GI Bill contracting abuses outside of flight to investigate.
- On Wednesday, October 13, NLD staff participated in a House Committee on Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Health hearing on pending legislation.
- On Wednesday, October 13, NLD staff participated in a House Committee on Veterans Affairs Committee entitled, "Domestic Violent Extremist Groups and the Recruitment of Veterans."
- On Wednesday, October 13, NLD staff participated in a Vet Smile Dental Program brief by VA with other VSO's
- On Wednesday, October 6, NLD staff conducted an interview with the National Defense Radio show to discuss the termination of the Troops to Teachers program, and congressional efforts to revive it.
- On Thursday, October 14, NLD staff met with the office of Rep. Raul Ruiz (D-CA) regarding the VA Federal Supremacy Project and their efforts to implement National Standards of Practice
- On Wednesday, October 6, NLD Staff attended a Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee hearing on pending nominations for VA Assistant Secretary for Enterprise Integration and the Assistant Labor Secretary for Veterans.
- On Thursday, October 7, NLD staff conducted an interview with the Military Times about congressional efforts to revive the Troops to Teachers program.
- On Thursday, October 7, NLD Staff attended a House Veterans' Affairs Committee Subcommittee Hearing on Technology Modernization.
- On Friday, October 8, NLD staff participated in a GAO call on DOD credentialing efforts for a congressionally mandated report on military credentialing.
- On Friday, October 8, NLD staff met with the Senate Finance Committee majority staff to address the rumors of plans to peg medicare drug pricing to VA drug pricing.

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