

# VETERANS AFFAIRS AND REHABILITATION

## WEEKLY UPDATE

Week Ending — 03/07/2025

### *Division Operations*

#### Meetings:

- March 4: Director attended the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) Nomination Hearing held *To Consider the Nomination of Mr. Elbridge A. Colby to be Under Secretary of Defense for Policy.*
- March 4: Director attended a Joint House and Senate VSO Hearing entitled, *"Legislative Hearing Presentation of The Veterans of Foreign Affairs Wars of the U.S. & Multi VSOs: PVA, IAVA, SVA, TAPS, EDF, NCHV".*
- March 4: Director attended an American Legion x Healing Breakthrough Intro Meeting.
- March 5: Director attended the Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs (DAMA) Legislative Hearing titled: *"Legislative Hearing on: H.R. XXX, Governing Unaccredited Representatives Defrauding VA Benefits Act; H.R. XXX, Preserving Lawful Utilization of Services for Veterans Act of 2025; and Discussion Draft: To amend title 38, United States Code, to allow for certain fee agreements for services rendered in the preparation, presentation, and prosecution of initial claims and supplemental claims for benefits under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.".*
- March 6: Director attended an Online interview with CBS News Radio Network *regarding the cuts from the Department of Government Efficiency impacting the Department of Veterans Affairs.*

## ***Health Policy Team (HPT) Operations***

### **Meetings:**

- March 3: Health Policy Team (HPT) attended the check in zoom call with the HVAC Majority Staff to discuss ongoing veteran legislation.
- March 4: HPT met with a private citizen who was concerned about the recent Executive Orders and its impact on VA staffing levels and research capabilities.
- March 4: HPT met with representatives of the VA External Provider Scheduling (EPS) to discuss how the program is increasing the efficiency of scheduling appointment with VA and Community Care Providers.

### **Legislative Bill Reviews:**

- **S. X – Veterans Mental Health and Addiction Therapy Quality of Care Act— Sen. Cornyn (R-TX)**
  - To require a study on the quality-of-care difference between mental health and addiction therapy care provided by health care providers of the Department of Veterans Affairs compared to non-Department providers, and for other purposes.

Position: **Support**

Supporting Resolutions:

- Resolution No. 18: Mental Health Programs for Justice-Involved Veterans
- Resolution No. 1: Be the One Mental Wellness Committee

- **S. X – External Provider Scheduling Program of Department of Veterans Affairs— Sen. Moran (R-KS)**
  - To amend title 38, United States Code, to establish an external provider scheduling program to assist the Department of Veterans Affairs in scheduling appointments for care and services under the Veterans Community Care Program, and for other purposes.

Position: **Support**

Supporting Resolutions:

- Resolution No 14: Access to Care

- **S. 5269 – VetPAC Act of 2025—Sen. Cassidy (R-LA), Sen. Hirno (D-HI)**
  - To amend title 38, United States Code to establish a commission to review operations at the Veterans Health Administration and submit to Congress reports with respect to that review, and for other purposes.

Position: **No Position**

Supporting Resolutions:

- None

- **S. 275– ACCESS Act of 2025—Sen. Moran (R-KS)**

- To improve the provision of care services under the Veterans Community Care Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

Position: **Support with Amendments**

Supporting Resolutions:

- Resolution No 14: Access to Care

- **S. X – SAVES Act- Sen. Blumenthal (D-CT)**

- To amend title 38, United States Code, to expand health care and benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs for military sexual trauma, and for other purposes.

Position: **Support**

Supporting Resolutions:

- Resolution No. 67: Military Sexual Trauma

- **S. X – Representing VA with Accuracy (REP VA) Act– Sen. Steube (R-AK)**

- To amend title 38, United States Code, to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to improve telephone communication by the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

Position: **Support**

Supporting Resolutions:

- Resolution No.3: Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability

- **S.201 - ACES Act – Sen. Kelly (D-AZ)**

- To amend title 38, To provide for a study by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine on the prevalence and mortality of cancer among individuals who served as active-duty aircrew in the Armed Forces, and for other purposes.

Position: **Support**

Supporting Resolutions:

- Resolution No. 118: Environmental Exposures

- **S. X – Love Lives on Act – Moran (R-Kan.) Warnock (D-Ga.)**

- To amend title 38, To amend titles 10 and 38, United States Code, to improve benefits and services for surviving spouses, and for other purposes.

Position: **Support**

Supporting Resolutions:

Resolution No. 36: Prevent Gold Star Spouses Loss of Benefits

- **H.R. 680 – Caring for Survivors Act – Rep. Hayes (D-CT-5)**
  - To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve and to expand eligibility for dependency and indemnity compensation paid to certain survivors of certain veterans, and for other purposes.

Position: **Support**

Supporting Resolutions:

- Resolution No. 48: Dependency and Indemnity Compensation for Surviving Spouses.

- **S. X – Veteran Fraud Reimbursement Act**
  - To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the repayment by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs of benefits misused by a fiduciary, and for other purposes.

Position: **Support**

Supporting Resolutions:

- Resolution No. 377: Support for Veteran Quality of Life

- **S. X – Veterans 2nd Amendment Protection Act – Sen. Kennedy (R-LA)**
  - To amend title 38, United States Code, to prohibit the Secretary of Veterans Affairs from transmitting certain information to the Department of Justice for Use by the national instant criminal background check system (NICS)

Position: **Support**

Supporting Resolutions:

- Resolution No. 27: Amend Title 38, United States Code, to Clarify the Treatment of a Veteran as Adjudicated Mentally Incompetent for Certain Purposes.

- **S. 610 – Ensuring VetSuccess On Campus Act of 2025 – Sen. Blumenthal (D-CT)**
  - To expand the VetSuccess on Campus program of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

Position: **Support**

Supporting Resolutions:

- Resolution No. 345: Support for Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program Hiring More Counselors and Employment Coordinators

- **S.XX - Veterans' Claims Act of 2025**

- To amend title 38, United States Code, to reinstate criminal penalties for persons charging veterans unauthorized fees relating to claims for benefits under the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

Position: **No Position**

- **S. Servicemembers and Veterans Empowerment and Support Act of 2025**

- To amend title 38, United States Code, to expand health care and benefits from Department of Veterans Affairs for military Sexual Trauma

Position: **Support**

Supporting Resolutions:

- Resolution No. 18: Veteran Military Sexual Trauma (MST) Claims Training  
[Res. No 18](#)
- Resolution No. 67: Military Sexual Trauma
- [Res. No 67](#)

## ***Claims & Appeals Team Operations***

### **Accreditations**

- Applications Received from TAL Departments	3
- Certifications Submitted by TAL Washington Office	7
- Certifications Approved by VA's Office of General Counsel	5

### **The American Legion Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA) Unit**

- AMA Appeals Pending (125+ Days)	0
- Informal Hearing Presentations (IHPs) Prepared	243
- Memos Generated	3
- Phone Inquiries	153
- Internal Quality Reviews	3
- Individual Training	1 hour
- Team Training	0 hours
- Hearings	1
- Board Dispositions	71
o Appeals Granted	25 (35.2%)
o Remanded	32 (45.1%)
o Denied	14 (19.7%)
o Other	0 (0%)
 Retroactive Awards Won for Veterans	 \$1,676,156

### **National Veterans Service Office**

- Phone Calls	110
- Emails	39
- Referrals	3
- Discharge Upgrades	1
- Written Correspondence	5
- Claims Submitted	5
- Evidence Submitted	0
- POA Submitted	7
- Training Hours	4
- HLR Informal Conference Calls	0
- In-Person Conference	0

### **Pension & Debt Management**

- New Compensation Claims	7
- New Pension Claims	4
- Supporting Submissions	7
- Sensitive Claims	8
- File Reviews	192
- Phone Contacts/E-Mails/Inquiries	358

- Debt Notices Received	240
- Insurance Actions	0
- Waivers Requested	10
- Waivers Granted	22
- Walk-Ins	10
- Hearings	0
- Misc. Notification Letters Processed	7
- Debt Waiver Granted	\$355,331

## ***Benefits Policy Team (BPT) Operations***

### **Meetings:**

- Feb 25th – Deputy Director for Benefits & Claims (DDBC) and the Benefits Policy team (BPT) attended Disabled American Veterans (DAV) National Commander’s reception dinner to meet fellow service officers and government officials from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).
- Feb 27th – DDBC, Benefit Policy Analyst, and Benefits Coordinator had a meeting with the Bergman & Moore, LLC, to discuss planning details of the upcoming 2025 DSO Symposium.
- Feb 28th – DDBC and Benefit Policy Analyst conducted a predeparture meeting with the San Juan Regional Office to prepare for the upcoming Regional Office Action Review in San Juan, PR.
- March 3- DDBC and Legislative Associate joined a discussion with other Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) regarding the upcoming House Veterans' Affairs (HVAC) Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs (DAMA) hearing, as well as other legislative issues.
- March 4 – DDBC had a lunch meeting with VA Office of Enterprise Integration Analytics Service Director to discuss data sharing and analysis.
- March 4 – DDBC participated Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) biweekly check-in meeting with VSOs. Marty Caraway will no longer serve as the VBA VSO Liaison as of March 7, 2025.
- Mar 5th– DDBC and BPT attended HVAC DAMA hearing entitled, “Potential Bills to Support Veterans Filing VA Disability Compensation Claims.”

### **Projects**

- Consultation with Departments of Latin America and France to devise a new Foreign Medical Program (FMP) resolution.

### **Legislative Activities**

- **S xx – Servicemembers and Veteran Empowerment and Support (SAVES) Act of 2025**
  - *To amend title 38, United States Code, to expand health care and benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs for military sexual trauma, and for other purposes* **Support.**
- **S xx – Veterans Second Amendment Protection Act of 2025**
  - *To amend title 38, United States Code, to prohibit the Secretary of Veterans Affairs (SECVA) from transmitting certain information to the Department of*



*Justice for use by the national instant criminal background check system (NICS) – Support.*

- **S. xx – Veterans Fraud Reimbursement Act of 2025**
  - to amend title 38 USC by modifying the process that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) follows for reissuance of misused VA benefits when a veteran is defrauded by a VA-assigned fiduciary – **Support.**
  
- **S. xx – Veterans Transition Support Act of 2025**
  - To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the Solid Start program of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes – **Support.**
  
- **Statement for Record (SFR)** to House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs (DAMA) entitled:
  - *Discussion Draft, Governing Unaccredited Representatives Defrauding VA Benefits (GUARD) Act – Support.*
  
  - *Discussion Draft, Preserving Lawful Utilization of Services for Veterans (PLUS) Act of 2025 – Oppose.*
  
  - *Discussion Draft: To amend title 38, United States Code, to allow for certain fee agreements for services rendered in the preparation, presentation, and prosecution of initial claims and supplemental claims for benefits under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes – No Position* pending amendments to the bill text.

## **DSO Program**

- **2025 Q1 The American Legion Nationwide Service Officer Conference** will be held virtually on Thursday, March 27, 2025, at 1pm. Invitation will be sent out next week.
- **ALAT 201 Advanced Class** registration closes on March 10<sup>th</sup> with course officially on March 11<sup>th</sup>.

## **Accreditations**

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|---|---|
| - Applications Received from TAL Departments                | 3 |
| - Certifications Submitted by TAL Washington Office         | 7 |
| - Certifications Approved by VA’s Office of General Counsel | 5 |

## **Cole Lyle**

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End of VA&R weekly update – 03/07/2025