

Legislative Division Weekly

GRASSROOTS ACTION UPDATES

This week, we are asking Legionnaires to contact their elected representatives to fight back against predatory Claims Sharks! The American Legion wants the return of criminal penalties enforced against these non-accredited violators *Go to the [Action Center](#) to quickly email a letter of support to your member 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. To review our priorities, you can check out our [Advocacy Toolkit](#).

DEMOCRATS HELP ADVANCE FOREIGN AID BILLS



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

The House Rules Committee late Thursday night advanced a package of foreign aid bills — but only with help from Democrats who, in a rare move, supported the procedural vote amid opposition from a trio of hard-line Republicans.

The panel voted 9-3 to adopt the rule, which governs debate for the legislation, with Reps. Thomas Massie (R-Ky.), Chip Roy (R-Texas) and Ralph Norman (R-S.C.) opposing the effort.

The successful vote allows the full House to vote on the rule and open debate on three foreign aid bills — sending assistance to Israel, Ukraine and allies in the Indo-Pacific — plus a fourth that includes other national security priorities, such as a TikTok ban.

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Rule votes — in committee and on the floor — are typically mundane, party-line occurrences, with the members from the majority party backing the rule and lawmakers in the minority party voting against it. But with conservatives voting against the rule out of opposition to Ukraine aid and the exclusion of border security measures, Democrats crossed the aisle to back the procedural vote.

The rule for the foreign aid legislation allows votes on specific amendments to the Ukraine, Indo-Pacific and national security measures. The Israel bill, however, will not have any amendments considered.

Also included in the rule is language that says if the House approves each of the four bills — they will receive separate floor votes — they will be merged together and sent to the Senate as one package.

Thursday night's successful rule votes mark a crucial hurdle cleared for the foreign aid package, which has faced intense criticism from hard-line Republicans since Speaker Mike Johnson (R-La.) unveiled the outline for his plan Monday.

The legislation includes \$26.38 billion for Israel, \$60.84 billion for Ukraine and \$8.12 billion for allies in the Indo-Pacific. The fourth national security bill features a ban of TikTok in the U.S. if the platform's parent company does not sell it, language to send some of the new Ukraine aid in the form of a loan, and a provision that allows the administration to use seized Russian assets to help cover the costs of Ukrainian reconstruction.

The bipartisan vote, however, could land Johnson in more hot water with his right flank. Hard-line conservatives have been up in arms with Johnson's propensity to cut deals with Democrats over the criticism of Republicans — a dynamic that has become necessary in the narrowly divided House, but one that continues to incense conservatives.

Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-Ga.) filed a motion to vacate — the same mechanism used to oust former Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) — against Johnson late last month, but she has not said when she plans to force a vote on the resolution.

Massie announced earlier this week that he would be signing on to the legislation as a co-sponsor.

House GOP leadership also teed up a vote on a separate border bill Thursday meant to appease hard-liners who were frustrated that Johnson's foreign aid package excluded provisions to address the situation at the southern border.

The House will consider that bill under suspension of the rules process Friday, which eliminates the need to first pass a procedural rule but also requires two-thirds support for passage.

Leadership initially tried to move the bill through regular order, but opposition from conservatives on the Rules Committee scuttled those plans.

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FY25 Budget Request for the VA

On April 11th, the House Veterans Affairs Committee held a hearing to consider the Administration's FY25 budget request for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). As usual, that request included FY26 advanced funding numbers, as well. Secretary Denis McDonough was the witness.

For FY25, the VA's total request is *\$369.3 billion*. This includes both mandatory and discretionary funding, as well as collections and the Recurring Expenses Transformational Fund (RETF). This is a \$32.9 billion, or 9.8%, increase above the previous year.

The discretionary request is \$134 billion, with \$4.4 billion from medical care collections and \$307 million from the RETF. That is an \$8.9 billion, or 6.2%, decrease. The mandatory request is \$235.3 billion, with \$24.5 billion from the Toxic Exposures Fund (TEF). This represents an increase of \$41.8 billion, or 21.6%, above FY24.

The decrease in discretionary spending comes from the Fiscal Responsibility Act (FRA) caps. Regardless, the VA says this amount will fully fund care and benefits for all 9.1 million enrolled Veterans.

The FY26 advanced medical care funding request includes \$131.4 billion in discretionary funding and \$22.8 billion in mandatory TEF funding. The rest of the FY26 advanced funding request is \$222.2 billion to fund Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) programs.

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.

Jay Bowen, Colorado

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

Mr. Bowen met with staff from Congressman John Hickenlooper (D-CO) in Denver, CO. In Mr. Bowen's report, he shared that he discussed key Legion priorities and presented a copy of the TAL legislative agenda for this year!

Mr. Bowen also serves as chairman for The American Legion's Veteran Employment & Education Division commission.

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Thank you, Mr. Bowen, 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.

LEGISLATIVE DIVISION UPDATES

Legislative Division staff conducted Grassroots Training for the Department of California during their Legion College session this week! Thank you to Legionnaire Chris Yates for organizing the training and letting us present this important information.

Our legislative staff met with representatives from Rep. Garbarino and Senator Lee's offices to discuss ongoing priorities and seek their support for legislation that expands veteran hiring. In addition, the team attended coalition meetings to advocate for issues such as passing the Richard Star Act, recognizing the work of the "Hello Girls" of World War I, Military Sexual Trauma treatment and prevention, and VA's National Standards of Practice. Our team continues to work on strengthening our relationships with other organizations that are working alongside us to fight for veterans, while being a trusted resource on the Hill for both members and staff.

Legislative Associate Jake Corsi ran in the Boston Marathon on Monday and finished in the top 2%! His time was 2:36:40. Congratulations, Jake!

GRASSROOTS INFORMATION

Interested in what the Legion is advocating for in Congress on *Suicide Prevention & Peer Support*? Check out our information paper 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>

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UPCOMING CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS

As of Friday, April 19th, at Noon ET, there are no hearings scheduled in the House or Senate Veterans Affairs or Armed Services Committees for next week.

Previous HVAC hearings can be viewed at: [Calendar Home | House Committee on Veterans Affairs](#)

Previous SVAC hearings can be viewed at: [Hearings - U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs](#)

[View The American Legion Legislative Handbook Here](#)