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August 1, 2025

WEEKLY GRASSROOTS NEWSLETTER

This week, we are asking Legionnaires to contact Congress to request support for the *Major Richard Star Act*! This reform would ensure that combat-injured retirees can receive both their Department of Defense retirement pay and the disability compensation earned through their sacrifices. On July 22, a critical step was taken when Senators Richard Blumenthal, Mike Crapo, and Elizabeth Warren announced their intent to file the text of the bill as an amendment to the Fiscal Year 2026 National Defense Authorization Act. *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.

NEED TO FIND YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS?

<https://www.votervoice.net/AmericanLegion/Address>

TOP GRASSROOTS DEPARTMENTS

Wisconsin	105
New York	87
Kansas	85
Tennessee	82
Florida	47

These are the number of e-mail messages these Departments sent to Congress on the VoterVoice campaigns this past week.

Register more participants in your Department to increase the number of veteran voices advocating on the Hill!

<https://www.votervoice.net/AmericanLegion/Register>

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

The American Legion's 106th National Convention is from August 22-28 in Tampa Bay, Florida. To stay up to date on information, schedules, and more, go to the information page [here](#).

The Legislative Commission will meet Saturday August 23rd in Tampa Bay to hear updates from the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees and discuss best-practices for conducting meetings with your members of Congress.

PRESIDENT TRUMP SIGNS LANDMARK VA HOME LOAN PROGRAM REFORM ACT INTO LAW

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

Today, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Chairman Mike Bost (R-Ill.), and Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity Chairman Rep. Derrick Van Orden (R-Wis.), released the following statements after President Trump signed Rep. Van Orden's bill, H.R. 1815, [the VA Home Loan Program Reform Act](#), into law.

H.R. 1815, [the VA Home Loan Program Reform Act](#), will create a partial claim program at VA as part of the Committee's efforts to modernize the VA Home Loan program – which **currently serves 3.7 million veterans – to allow veterans who have fallen behind on their mortgages to receive federal assistance** that is already available through other federal housing programs. Currently, **nearly 70,000 veteran homeowners** are more than 90 days late on their mortgage payments. This bill provides these veterans with needed relief and a second chance to keep their homes as a result of the new program. H.R. 1815 also includes the **proper funding levels for the VA Grant and Per Diem program, as part of VA's homelessness prevention programs** to fund community agencies providing services to veterans experiencing homelessness. To learn more about H.R. 1815, click [here](#).

"Our veterans and their families should have every tool at their disposal to keep their homes and reduce the risk of foreclosure if they fall into financial hardship or endure a national disaster. Today, House Republicans and President Trump made that a reality for every veteran homeowner," **said Chairman Bost**. "Rep. Van Orden's *VA Home*

Loan Program Reform Act will modernize the VA Home Loan to meet veterans' needs and reduce the risk of veteran homelessness. I'm proud that we fought hard to get this good bill to President Trump's desk to keep our promise to those who have served."

"President Trump is the strongest support of veterans and servicemembers of any president in our nation's history," **said Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity Chairman Van Orden.** "This law helps fulfill a promise to those who protected us with their service and continue to do so today by providing a path to maintain homeownership. I am very proud of our legislation and thankful to President Trump for signing it into law."

H.R. 1815, *the VA Home Loan Program Reform Act*, is supported by a number of key stakeholders including: Mortgage Bankers Association, Rocket Mortgage, National Association of Realtors (NAR), Freedom Mortgage, National Association of Mortgage Brokers (NAMB), Lyft, Mission Roll Call, New England Center and Home for Veterans (NECHV), National Coalition for Homeless Veterans (NCHV), Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), and The American Legion.

"On behalf of The American Legion's 1.5 million members, I extend our deepest gratitude to Chairman Bost, Ranking Member Takano, Congressman VanOrden, and the dedicated staff of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs for their steadfast leadership in advancing and securing the final passage of H.R. 1815, the VA Home Loan Program Reform Act. This critical legislation represents a profound commitment to safeguarding the financial security and dignity of veteran homeowners, especially during times of hardship. Your timely action ahead of the August recess reflects unwavering dedication to those who have borne the battle. We commend your continued advocacy on behalf of America's veterans," said **James LaCoursiere, National Commander, The American Legion.**

"Those who have served our country deserve access to the same protections available to other homeowners, and the enactment of the VA Home Loan Program Reform Act of 2025 brings us closer to that reality. Now that the Act has been signed into law, the VA can develop a strong, effective solution that provides mortgage servicers with the tools they need to support servicemembers and veterans in today's higher-rate environment. We appreciate the Committee's dedication to seeing the bill across the finish line," **said Rocket Mortgage.**

"This important legislation is a critical step forward in ensuring that distressed veteran homeowners have access to a proven and sustainable loss mitigation solution," **said Bob Broeksmit, President and CEO, Mortgage Bankers Association (MBA).**

"The VFW is pleased that H.R. 1815, VA Home Loan Program Reform Act, has passed into law. Introduced by VFW member and House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity Chairman Derrick Van Orden, this law will prevent thousands of

veterans from foreclosing on their homes by providing a partial claim option where VA can cover delinquent payments and work with lenders to structure appropriate repayments. Additionally, it will strengthen VA's homelessness prevention efforts through the Grant and Per Diem Program. The VFW thanks Congress and the White House for quickly passing this legislation to help veterans stay in their homes," **said Kristina Keenan, National Legislative Director, Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW).**

"The passing of H.R.1815 is critical to giving the Department of Veterans Affairs the ability for Freedom Mortgage to further assist thousands of struggling VA borrowers in finding the best solution to stay in their homes, in line with other federally supported programs. We truly appreciate the bipartisan effort and stakeholder collaboration from Chairs Bost and Moran, as well as Ranking Members Takano and Blumenthal, to pass this bill and further strengthen their support of Veterans and those in active military service," **said Stanley C. Middleman, President and CEO, Freedom Mortgage.**

ADVOCATING FOR WOMEN VETERANS ON CAPITOL HILL

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



The American Legion continues to fight for health-care facilities that are inclusive, empowering survivors of Military Sexual Trauma and investing in research to support women as they age.

Women are the fastest-growing demographic within the military and veteran community. Still, women in the military are viewed differently compared to their male counterparts. Women have served in every conflict since the Revolutionary War, and yet, the infrastructure that exists to support their specific needs is modeled after men.

For The American Legion, these issues are deeply personal. Our female members visit the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and are asked where their veteran is or if their husband served. This culture must change.

The American Legion is proud to work with our membership, other veteran service organizations (VSOs), and Congress to address these challenges. As the 119th Congress progresses, The American Legion is proud to endorse, advocate for, and offer grassroots support for legislation that supports and invests in women who have served. These legislative proposals are wide-reaching, dynamic and seek to address deficiencies in a systematic manner. The American Legion is fighting for health-care facilities that are inclusive, empowering survivors of Military Sexual Trauma (MST) and investing in research to support women as they age.

Ensuring our health-care facilities are accessible and inclusive

The American Legion firmly supports a fully funded VA that meets the needs of all veterans. For many, this includes gender-specific medical care. For women veterans seeking care for their reproductive health, many quickly discover their options are few and far between. VA medical centers are not statutorily mandated to hire an OB-GYN, even on a part-time basis. VA often struggles with establishing treatment programs or counseling that is gender-specific and [tailored to their needs](#). Women veterans even struggle to find maternity care, which isn't the norm for civilians.

To begin to address some of these challenges, it is critical that Congress maintain oversight over the implementation of the Deborah Sampson Act. Passed as a provision within the [Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020](#), this legislation expands access to care for women veterans by creating an Office of Women's Health, putting in place dedicated women's health providers, expanding legal services, and providing access to child care for those receiving care within VA. The Deborah Sampson Act also requires VA to provide data on incidences of sexual harassment and sexual assault that occur within their facilities. It is imperative to document and process this information, understand where most of the reporting originates, and continue to take action to address this challenge.

To continue this progress, The American Legion is proud to support the [Building Resources and Access for Veterans' Mental Health Engagement \(BRAVE\) Act](#). Led by Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., this legislation aims to address disparities in mental health care by improving the coordination of mental health outreach, investing in VA infrastructure, and increased training for providers to address the unique needs of women who have served.

As American Legion National Commander Jim LaCoursiere Jr. stated in Blumenthal's [press release](#), "This bill was built on the very real and traumatic experiences that

veterans, especially women, face during and after their service.” The American Legion is working with our partners within the military and veteran community to ensure that this legislation is a priority and that Congress must take action. Women veterans deserve to feel safe and to be treated with the utmost respect while accessing the services and benefits that they risked their lives to earn.

Empowering survivors of MST and combating veteran suicide

A [study](#) in 2022 conducted by Disabled American Veterans (DAV) found the suicide rate for women veterans was 92.4% higher than their female civilian counterparts. Again comparing to the civilian population, the suicide rate was 75% higher for women using VA services who reported experiencing MST. The American Legion’s top priority — [Be the One](#) — is to prevent veteran suicide through building awareness, conducting training and doing advocacy.

The American Legion has seen first-hand the challenges that VA has in addressing sexual assault and MST. In a recent System Worth Saving visit to New Orleans, a veteran shared that she is no longer comfortable attending group therapy at the VA because one of the members in her group was a registered sex offender. As a survivor of MST, this veteran highlighted the stark challenges the VA faces to adequately meet the needs of this population.

In January 2025, Rep. Tim Burchett, R-Tenn., introduced the [Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner in VA Hospitals \(SANE VA\) Act](#). This legislation recommends that VA hire at least one sexual assault nurse examiner or a health-care provider who is qualified to conduct a sexual assault forensic examination at each hospital and urgent care facility. At the conclusion of an examination, the veteran is then referred to a mental health provider for additional treatment and support. The American Legion is proud to endorse this legislation, especially the provisions that ensure the survivor receives additional support as they process their traumatic experience.

In addition to ensuring survivors are treated with respect and dignity, it is equally important that MST claims are processed in a timely manner. Unfortunately, the Legion is aware of multiple instances in which MST claims have been significantly delayed, wrongfully denied and not treated with respect. To address these challenges, The American Legion is proud to support the [Servicemembers and Veterans Empowerment and Support Act](#), introduced by Blumenthal and Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska. This legislation aims to address the challenges that MST survivors endure when processing their claims and ensures that the survivor is not retraumatized in the process.

Investing in research and care for menopause

Despite impacting half of the population, not much is known about menopause and its effects on women, let alone women who have served. In the aforementioned study,

[DAV notes](#) that the menopausal cycle is “often accompanied by both physical and behavioral symptoms” with women facing “an increased risk for cardiovascular disease and osteoporosis compared to their younger selves.” Additionally, 20% of perimenopausal women report symptoms of depression, which becomes complex when considering their additional factor of their service. With the aging population increasing, it is critical that we have adequate infrastructure and support systems in place to assist our veterans through this period.

One of the most prominent voices on this issue is Rep. Julia Brownley, D-Calif., who serves as the ranking member of the Health Subcommittee within the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs. Throughout her career in Congress, she has repeatedly prioritized improving access to care for women veterans and for aging veterans in general. Her legislation, the [Elizabeth Dole Home Care Act](#), specifically aimed at addressing the increasing aging population by including provisions that empower the veteran and support their caregivers. This bill served as the blueprint for the [Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act](#), which became law in January 2025.

The American Legion is proud to support Brownley’s bill, the [Improving Menopause Care for Veterans Act](#). This proposal directs the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to conduct a study and issue a report on the state of menopause care within the VA. The study would include a review of guidelines for training practitioners who diagnose and treat menopause, review veterans’ access to care to treat side effects, and hear first-hand from veterans who use VA to treat their menopause.

Empowering the servicewomen of tomorrow

The best way to ensure that our military is strong and capable of handling future challenges is to take care of our servicemembers today. In addition to the legislation mentioned, The American Legion is proud to endorse the Veteran Infertility Treatment Act, Cancer Care Coordination Act, Improving VA Care for Military Sexual Assault Act, Military Moms Act, Lactation Spaces for Veteran Moms Act, and the Servicewomen and Veterans Menopause Research Act. This will ensure our servicemembers know that our nation intends to keep the promise to care for those who have borne the battle, ensuring that military service remains a desirable path for future generations.

The American Legion actively works with a strong coalition of MSOs, VSOs, and congressional offices to tackle these challenges head-on. This mission is deeply personal to our team, a team that has experienced these challenges first-hand and who too often have their service questioned.

For their tenacity, grit, resilience and strength, The American Legion is proud to advocate for and serve women veterans every day.

Bailey Bishop is a Senior Legislative Associate in The American Legion's Legislative Division

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.

Jim Daube, Indiana

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

Last week, Jim reached out to Representative Rudy Yakym requesting a Veterans Town Hall to be held in his district during this summer's congressional recess. Although the Congressman was booked during recess, he was able to schedule a Veterans Roundtable in September! This will be a great opportunity for veterans in the Congressman's district to speak about legislative issues.

Thank you, Jim, for your report and the time you have dedicated to the Legion's legislative priorities.

GRASSROOTS INFORMATION

Interested in what the Legion is advocating for in Congress? Check out our [information papers and Legislative priorities](#). 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 8/1, there are no hearings scheduled. Congress will be in recess until September 2.

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](#)