



August 2, 2024

## WEEKLY GRASSROOTS NEWSLETTER

This week, we are asking Legionnaires to contact Congress to request support for the *Senator Elizabeth Dole 21<sup>st</sup> Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act!* The American Legion urges the passage of the Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act (HR8371), but some in Congress stand in opposition of this landmark legislation. This is a comprehensive veteran's package that includes many important provisions! *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!

**August 24-28, 2024** – The American Legion's 105<sup>th</sup> Annual National Convention! Held this year in New Orleans, this is the Legion's largest annual meeting. Here, you can learn from each other's creative solutions for success and challenges like those of your own Department. You do NOT need to be a delegate to attend! Reach out to your Department Headquarters or Adjutant to register and reserve a hotel room if you are interested in attending! You can find more information about convention, look over the calendar of events and more [here](#).

## **AMERICAN FLAGS SHOULD BE BORN IN THE USA NOW TOO, CONGRESS SAYS**

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

Soon, Old Glory will have to be born in the land of the free and not merely flying over it.

Congress has passed a proposal to require the federal government to purchase only American flags that have been completely manufactured in the U.S. The U.S. imports millions of American flags from overseas, mostly from China, and the sponsors of the proposal said it's time for American flags to originate in the country they represent.



Supporters of the proposal, led by Republican Sen. Susan Collins of Maine and Democratic Sen. Sherrod Brown of Ohio, said the change is more than just symbolic — they believe it will support American jobs and manufacturers while preserving the nation's most recognized banner.

“The American flag serves as a symbol of our identity, resolve, and values as one people. To honor its significance, the federal government should only use flags entirely manufactured in the United States,” Collins said.

Supporters of the proposal said Monday that they expect the measure to be signed into law soon. It was sent to President Joe Biden on Thursday.

Federal rules currently require the government to buy flags that contain half U.S.-made materials, supporters of the proposal said. The rule change, called the “All American Flag Act,” requires government-purchased flags to be produced entirely with American-made materials as well as manufactured in the U.S.

The value of U.S. flag imports in 2015 was well over \$4 million, according to federal data. The vast majority of those imports came from China, supporters of the rule change said.

In 2017, the U.S. imported some 10 million American flags, and 99.5% of them came from China, supporters of the proposal said. Those figures include all American flags imported into the country and not just those purchased by the federal government. Collins and Brown have been pushing for American flags to be [manufactured in the U.S.](#) for several years. Previous efforts to change the rules to require U.S.-made flags found success in the U.S. Senate but stalled when they reached the House of Representatives.

## **VETERAN BENEFITS FIX FACES HOLDS, UNLIKELY TO MOVE THIS WEEK**

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

Senators were preparing to leave town for the August recess without plugging a nearly \$3 billion hole in veterans benefits funding when efforts for a speedy fix were held up Wednesday. Advocates for a funding fix, including senior senators from both parties, were hoping to pass [legislation](#) to fill the shortfall by unanimous consent before the Senate adjourned for the week. But those plans came unglued after several senators made it clear they would object to swift passage.



Several senators have placed holds on the measure to wage objections over increased spending, said Sen. [Jerry Moran](#), R-Kan., the Veterans' Affairs Committee ranking member who supports the funding fix. "We have those who put holds on every bill and they haven't lifted them yet," Moran said, adding he doesn't expect any unanimous consent request to be made before September.

Approximately 7 million veterans and their beneficiaries risk not receiving pension and other benefits as scheduled on Oct. 1 if the funding is not provided by Sept. 20, Department of Veterans Affairs officials have told lawmakers. The agency is facing an increase in demand for services following the implementation of a 2022 law ([PL 117-167](#)) expanding access to health and other benefits for veterans exposed to toxic substances while serving overseas, which the VA has said led to the shortfall.

Sen. [Tommy Tuberville](#), R-Ala., said Wednesday that he wants a hearing on the topic to be scheduled, and would object to a unanimous consent request to pass the bill until that hearing is on the calendar. "All of a sudden we come up \$3 billion short," he said. "Let's have a hearing about it and find out why we are short. I'm not against giving them the money, but we shouldn't just give them a blank check."

Senate Veterans' Affairs Chairman [Jon Tester](#), D-Mont., said he would agree to hold a hearing, though Tuberville said Wednesday night he had not yet received a commitment on when that would occur. Utah Republican Sen. [Mike Lee](#) also has a hold on the bill, a Republican aide familiar with the situation said. Lee's staff did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Sen. [Kevin Cramer](#), R-N.D., asked for a briefing with Veterans Affairs Secretary Denis McDonough in a [letter](#) to Tester. The letter, signed by Tuberville and four other Republican senators, states that a hearing must be scheduled immediately, and cannot wait for the Senate to return in September. "The American people, and especially our veterans, deserve a government operating with full transparency and integrity," the GOP senators wrote in their letter, dated Wednesday. "They expect results, not a blank check to further bureaucratic mismanagement."

Tester said in a statement that he plans to schedule an oversight hearing but stressed that the bill needs to move forward now. "I strongly urge my colleagues not to play politics with the money to pay for veterans' benefits," he said. "These benefits must be paid regardless of any hearing, and we have an obligation to provide veterans certainty now by passing this funding bill immediately."

Tester is a co-sponsor of the bill introduced by Sen. [Sherrod Brown](#), D-Ohio, that would backfill a roughly \$2.3 billion shortfall facing VA compensation and pensions, plus \$597 million for readjustment benefits. They are considered the two most vulnerable Democratic incumbents this November.

## 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.

### John C. Hendrick, Arkansas

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

John, the National Legislative Commission Vice Chairman of Arkansas worked diligently to help flip one of the most obstinate opposers of the Afghan Assistance Amendment to the NDAA. Because of the tremendous grassroots efforts made by John and the rest of the Department of Arkansas, Senator Cotton changed his opinion and is now in support of the AAAA.

*Thank you, John, 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](mailto: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](mailto:grassroots@legion.org) or [ejohnson@legion.org](mailto:ejohnson@legion.org).

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

## **LEGISLATIVE DIVISION ACTIVITIES**

We have been preparing for National Convention in New Orleans August 24-28<sup>th</sup>. The **Legislative Commission meeting will be held on Saturday August 24<sup>th</sup> at 9am** and we look forward to hearing from Chairwoman Harris and Chairman Oertel. There will be two continuing education classes on Grassroots Outreach. Check the Convention website for schedules!



## **UPCOMING CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS**

As of Friday, August 1, 2024, there are **NO** upcoming hearings scheduled. The House and the Senate have begun their summer recesses; their sessions will commence September 9th.

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](#)