



## ★ ★ ★ LEGISLATIVE WEEKLY ★ ★ ★

December 12, 2025  
**WEEKLY GRASSROOTS NEWSLETTER**

This week, we are asking Legionnaires to contact Congress to urge them to pass *H.R. 2605/S. 1441, the Service Dogs Assisting Veterans (SAVES) Act!* This legislation proposes a five-year pilot program for the VA to award grants to nonprofit organizations to provide trained service dogs to eligible veterans, cover the cost of training, and provide lifelong veterinary insurance.

*The American Legion appreciates 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.**



Thank you to Timothy for sharing his "good doodle!"

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**

<b>Kansas</b>	<b>332</b>
<b>Wisconsin</b>	<b>303</b>
<b>Tennessee</b>	<b>276</b>
<b>New York</b>	<b>271</b>
<b>Florida</b>	<b>246</b>
<b>Texas</b>	<b>204</b>
<b>Virginia</b>	<b>139</b>
<b>Ohio</b>	<b>132</b>
<b>California</b>	<b>120</b>
<b>Indiana</b>	<b>115</b>

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>

## **\$900 BILLION NDAA: WHAT IS IN, WHAT WAS LEFT OUT OF MAJOR DEFENSE SPENDING BILL**

*This article's original publication can be found here*



The \$900 billion National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2026 passed the House of Representatives on Wednesday in bipartisan fashion. The final version includes and also left out key provisions after months of negotiations by lawmakers on Capitol Hill.

The [3,086-page bill](#) passed the House on a 312-112 vote (115 Democrats, 197 Republicans voted in favor) with Republicans and Democrats [finding enough common ground](#) to forward the legislation to the Senate—where it is expected to pass the GOP-controlled chamber and then be signed by President Donald Trump.

This year's NDAA, passed annually by Congress, appropriates large amounts of funding that will impact the departments of Defense and Energy, health care, troops and salaries, research and development, immigration at the U.S.-Mexico border, collective bargaining, and diversity initiatives. [Not all lawmakers got what they wanted](#) but high-ranking committee members expressed mostly positive sentiments after the bill's passing.

"This is a strong bipartisan bill that delivers for our warfighters and deters our adversaries," House Armed Services Committee Chairman Mike Rogers (R-AL) said on

the House floor prior to the bill's passing. "It will fundamentally reform the defense acquisition enterprise. It will continue historic improvements in the quality of life for our servicemembers and their families.

"It will build the ready, capable, and lethal fighting force we need to deter China and our other adversaries. And it will deliver on President Trump's Peace Through Strength agenda. I urge all members to support it."

Rep. Adam Smith (D-WA), the ranking Democrat on the committee, called the bill "the most ambitious swing at acquisition reform that we've taken," according to the Associated Press.

"This NDAA falls short. Trump and [Defense Secretary Pete] Hegseth are deploying troops to our streets, carrying out extrajudicial killings, and undermining our military readiness. Congress must reassert its oversight. We need accountability—not just handouts to Trump," said Rep. John Garamendi (D-CA), a senior Armed Services Committee member, in a post on X.

## **Big Money**

The House-passed bill in part authorizes some military construction projects and extends their authorization from previous fiscal years; requires the Department of Defense to develop a national strategy on the security implications of emerging biotechnologies; requires the Navy to implement certain processes to improve combat readiness of surface ships maintained and repaired at private shipyards; and extends the Pacific Deterrence Initiative which designed to enhance U.S. deterrence and defense posture in the Indo-Pacific region.

A GOP-issued summary of the legislation says the NDAA authorizes \$291 billion for maintenance and operations; \$234 billion for military personnel and health care; \$162 billion for procurement; \$146 billion for research and development; \$34 billion for nuclear defense programs; and \$20 billion for military construction and family housing.

Lawmakers say the FY 2026 bill overall will save taxpayers nearly \$20 billion, including \$40.5 million from eliminating DEI activities; \$1.6 billion in cuts to climate change-related spending; \$1.2 billion from retiring obsolete aircraft and ships; \$6.8 billion from reductions in "unnecessary Pentagon bureaucracy"; \$5.5 billion in cuts to consulting and service contracts; and \$3.7 billion in cuts to inefficient defense programs.

## **NDAA's Major Inclusions**

Some of the NDAA's major highlights are as follows:

- A 3.8% pay raise for all military servicemembers, in addition to reauthorizing and expanding military bonuses and special pays; increases family separation

allowance for deployed servicemembers; and requires a study to improve the calculation of Basic Allowance for Housing to ensure it keeps up with rising rental costs.

- \$400 million for Ukraine security assistance.
- It extends the Pacific Deterrence Initiative (PDI) to improve U.S. posture in the Indo-Pacific region, including funding increases for new technologies needed to deter China such as hypersonic missiles, AI, autonomous systems, cyber, mobile micronuclear reactors, and high energy lasers. That includes over \$2.7 billion in essential military construction projects and expands in that region.
- Full funding (\$1 billion) towards the Taiwan Security Cooperation Initiative.
- \$1.5 billion in new security assistance for the Philippines.
- It formally establishes and authorizes \$175 million for the Baltic Security Initiative to strengthen the defensive capability and interoperability of the Baltic states.
- Full funding for the deployment of National Guard and active-duty troops in support of border patrol at the United States' southwest border, including over \$1 billion to fight drug trafficking (\$398 million for Defense Department support of counter-narcotics operations and \$216 million for National Guard counter-drug programs—\$100 million over the budget request).
- Reforms to military construction that costs 35% more on average than commercial construction, including accelerating construction and reducing costs by granting military departments multiyear contracting authority and authorizing the use of accelerated design-build and progressive design-build contracting methods to cut costs and speed up projects.
- Oversight of Defense Department spending by way of fully funding the department's Inspector General audit activities and requiring the department to submit quarterly reports to Congress on the status of balances and activities of funds previously approved within the One Big Beautiful Bill Act earlier this year.
- More than \$131 million for the construction of new military dining facilities and over \$1.5 billion for new construction of barracks and family housing.
- More than \$335 million to renovate military hospitals and build new medical facilities, which includes better access to specialty care by lowering the threshold for travel reimbursement for medical appointments from 100 to 75 miles.
- More than \$491 million to design and build new childcare centers, including annual reviews of childcare costs and a pilot program to increase childcare financial assistance in high-cost areas.
- More than \$206 million to build new schools for children of servicemembers and allows National Guard and reserve members called to active duty to enroll their children in Defense Department schools. It also authorizes \$50 million in Impact Aid assistance to public schools with military dependent students, and an

additional \$20 million in assistance to local schools teaching children with severe disabilities.

- It extends military recruitment bonuses.
- It prohibits the retirement of certain F-15E, A-10, C-130, E-3, RQ-4, and Grey Eagle aircraft, as well as the closure of the E-7A Wedgetail production line.
- \$26 billion in shipbuilding funding for the construction and support of numerous vessels including the third Columbia-class Ballistic Missile Submarine, one Virginia-class Submarine, one anti-submarine warfare auxiliary ship, and future procurements.
- More than \$38 billion for the development, procurement or modification of aircraft including full funding for the U.S. Air Force's F-47 and Navy's F/A-XX 6th Generation Aircraft programs.
- Builds the "Golden Dome" to update national missile defense policy.

### **What's Not in the Bill**

Some of what was excluded in the final version are as follows:

- The final bill ultimately did not include a provision mandating health care coverage for assisted reproductive technology, including in vitro fertilization (IVF), for [all active-duty service members](#). As previously reported by [Military.com](#), some Democrats and numerous reproductive organizations [warned prior to the final version](#) that its removal would prevent the expansion of IVF access to all servicemembers due to current insurance plans through TRICARE.
- It permanently repeals all existing Defense Department diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) offices, programs, training and activities, as well as future DEI-related endeavors.
- It cuts climate change-related programs at the Defense Department.
- It removes Section 1110, the bipartisan House provision that would have restored collective bargaining rights for the Defense Department's civilian workforce and would have prevented the department from using the bill's funds to enforce an executive order that strips collective bargaining rights from hundreds of thousands of DoD civilians.

Rep. Bob Onder (R-MO), urged GOP colleagues in November to strip the provision from the final bill, saying in an X post that it was "designed to stop union bosses from slowing down critical defense operations by pushing ineffective policies that hurt productivity" and would cause "political interference."

### **Hegseth's Travel Budget Tied to Caribbean Boat Strikes**

The House-passed version also includes a provision to withhold a quarter of Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth's travel budget until the Pentagon provides Congress with unedited videos of Caribbean airstrikes against alleged drug smuggling boats, according to reports.

It was included on the heels of the ongoing controversy surrounding orders to allegedly kill two survivors from a Sept. 2 strike, and further investigations by GOP-led House and Senate committees into whether that second strike was properly authorized and amounted to war crimes. The investigations remain ongoing.

### **Codifying Trump's Executive Orders**

The NDAA also codifies all or parts of 15 executive orders issued by President Trump, including the following:

- Restoring America's Fighting Force (EO 14185)
- Ending Radical and Wasteful Government Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Programs and Preferencing (EO 14151)
- Declaring a National Emergency at the Southern Border (Proclamation 10886)
- Securing Our Borders (EO 14165)
- Clarifying the Military's Role in Protecting the Territorial Integrity of the U.S. (EO 14167)
- Modernizing Defense Acquisitions and Spurring Innovation in the Defense Industrial Base (EO 14265)
- Building the Golden Dome for America (EO 14186)
- Deploying Advanced Nuclear Reactor Technologies for National Security (EO 14299)
- Restoring American Airspace Sovereignty (EO 14305)
- Unleashing American Drone Dominance (EO 14307)

## **LEGION ADDRESSES LEGISLATION, ENTREPRENEURSHIP, SECURITY ON CAPITOL HILL**

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

**Submitted testimony covers variety of impactful issues for veterans in health care, business and more.**

The American Legion submitted three Statements for the Record (SFRs) this week.

**Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs**

American Legion Director of Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Cole T. Lyle submitted an SFR ([download statement here](#)) on Dec. 10 to the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs. The SFR addressed the Legion's positions on pending legislation, including:

- S. 926, the Saving Our Veterans' Lives Act, which the Legion supports as currently written. This legislation would establish a program at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to provide vouchers for firearm storage devices to veterans upon request.
- S. 1116, the Ensuring Veterans' Final Resting Place Act, which the Legion supports with amendments. This legislation would remove restrictions on relocation of veterans' graves to cemeteries managed by the VA's National Cemetery Administration.
- S. 1657, the Review Every Veteran's Claim Act, which the Legion supports as currently written. This legislation would limit the VA's authority to deny a claim when a veteran misses an examination appointment.
- S. 1665, the Obligations to Aberdeen's Trusted Heroes (OATH) Act, which the Legion supports as currently written. This legislation would ensure that veterans who participated in classified programs would receive the full VA benefits they have earned.
- S. 1868, the Critical Access for Veterans Care Act, which the Legion opposes as currently written. This legislation proposes eliminating the VA referral for community care for veterans living in areas serviced by Critical Access Hospitals. Resolution No. 7: Ensuring VA Remain the Center of Care, states unequivocally that it is the position of The American Legion that the Veterans Health Administration should remain the center of care for American veterans.
- S. 1992, the Veterans Appeals Efficiency Act, which the Legion supports with amendments. This legislation would require an annual progress report to Congress from the Board of Veterans Appeals (BVA).
- S. 2061, the Molly R. Loomis Research for Descendants of Toxic Exposed Veterans Act, which the Legion supports as currently written. This legislation would commission first-of-its-kind, landmark research on birth defects among descendants of toxic-exposed veterans, enabled by the PACT Act.
- S. 2220, the Fighting for the Overlooked Recognition of Groups Operating in Toxic Test Environments in Nevada (FORGOTTEN) Veterans Act, which the Legion supports with amendments. This legislation would expand presumptive radiation exposure to members of the armed forces who served in Nevada's Test and Training Range (NTTR) and nearby locations.
- S. 2264, the Advancing VA's Emergency Response to (AVERT) Crises Act, which the Legion supports as currently written. This legislation would require the VA to produce comprehensive reports to Congress on VA's emergency management roles and the

VA's regional readiness centers. It would also require the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs to work with the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to produce a plan on how to facilitate fuel sharing during times of emergency.

- S. 2309, the Veteran Burial Timeliness and Death Certificate Accountability Act, which the Legion supports with amendments. This legislation would direct VA physicians and nurse practitioners to task of certifying and signing off a death certificate no later than 48 hours of learning of, or being notified of, the veteran's death.
- S. 2328, the Military Learning for Credit Act, which the Legion supports as currently written. This legislation would expand the use of VA education benefits by allowing student-veterans and eligible beneficiaries to use part of their education benefits for tests and exams that count toward a college degree.
- S. 2397, the Caring for our Veterans Health Act, which the Legion supports as currently written. This legislation requires VA to implement new guidelines ensuring that medical documents are properly tracked after community care appointments and would also measure how long it takes for veterans to get community care records.
- S. 2683, the VSAFE Act, which the Legion supports as currently written. This legislation would create a dedicated position in VA to oversee the necessary analytical monitoring, tracking, and coordination of scam and fraud prevention efforts with other federal agencies and veteran service organizations in real time.
- Senate Discussion Draft, the Veterans National Traumatic Brain Injury Treatment Act, which the Legion supports with amendments. This legislation seeks to provide veterans who rely on the VA for their healthcare needs access to hyperbaric oxygen therapy (HBOT) as a treatment option for PTSD and TBI symptoms.
- Senate Discussion Draft, the Fisher House Availability Act, which the Legion supports as currently written. This legislation seeks to expand Fisher House availability by making temporary lodging facilities on VA campuses available to members of the armed forces when the covered beneficiary must travel a significant distance to receive care at a non-VA facility.
- Senate Discussion Draft, the Leveraging Integrated Networks in Communities for Veterans Act, which the Legion supports with amendments. This legislation seeks to establish a nationwide pilot program for an interoperable community integration network, connecting VA facilities with public-private partnerships to deliver health and social services to veterans in need of assistance.
- Senate Discussion Draft, the SERVE Act, which the Legion supports as currently written. The SERVE Act will provide additional access of care for veterans by

mainstreaming other types of healthcare that may also be received at healthcare facilities run by the Department of Defense.

- Senate Discussion Draft, the Improving Access to Care for Rural Veterans Act, which the Legion supports as currently written. The draft legislation will establish partnerships between VA and rural hospitals, allowing for the rural sites to be designated as VA-authorized care sites.
- Senate Discussion Draft, the Commission on Equity and Reconciliation in the Uniformed Services Act, which the Legion supports as currently written. The proposed legislation will establish a commission tasked with the identification and compilation of DoD's historic policies concerning the policing of sexual orientation and gender identity within the uniformed services from World War II to present. Additionally, proposed legislation would require factsheets and examination of ramifications of such targeted policies onto the military LGBTQ+ community, such as the physical, mental, and financial tolls.
- Senate Discussion Draft, the Get Justice Involved Veterans BACK HOME Act, which the Legion supports as currently written. This legislation would mandate VA to provide mental healthcare to incarcerated veterans currently under the federal, state or local penal institution or correctional facility's purview, with an emphasis on those with a service-connected disability related to PTSD, TBI or MST.

### **House Committee on Small Business**

Also on Dec. 10, American Legion policy associate Demetricus Lion submitted an SFR ([download statement here](#)) before the House Committee on Small Business, addressing veteran entrepreneurship.

The SFR expressed the Legion's support of H.R. 865, the Service-Disabled Veteran Opportunities in Small Business Act. This legislation would provide clarity to the contracting process, improve the Small Business Act, and require the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) to issue a report to Congress detailing a list of each federal agency that failed to meet its contracting goals and provide training for federal agencies that failed to meet their contracting goals.

The American Legion also supports broadening access to capital and improving existing SBA programs, and supports the Veteran Entrepreneurship Empowerment Act, which would increase the guarantees covered by SBA, decrease down payment requirements, and eliminate fees on the 7(a) and 504 loan programs for veterans; and the Veterans Member Business Loan Act, which removes an unnecessary cap that limits credit unions from lending to veteran-owned small businesses.

“By excluding these loans from the member business loan cap, Congress can unlock more capital for veterans at no cost to taxpayers,” Lion wrote in the SFR.

### **House Committee on Homeland Security**

On Dec. 11, American Legion policy analyst Joshua Crisostomo submitted testimony before the House Committee on Homeland Security. The American Legion’s testimony ([download here](#)) focused on:

- Cybersecurity threats, including cyber-attacks, cybersecurity in space, and global adversaries.
- Threats from transnational criminal organizations (TCOs), including the synthetic drug crisis, TCO financial networks and illicit finance within the United States, and homeland security infrastructure and artificial intelligence.

“In our increasingly digital world, protecting our homeland from state sponsored groups and transnational criminal organizations requires a proactive approach to strengthen our cybersecurity infrastructure, promote public and private collaboration, and leverage innovative AI technology. The vulnerability of our critical infrastructure, financial systems, private businesses, and global supply chains necessitates an integrated, whole-of-government approach,” Crisostomo wrote in the SFR.

## **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.

### **Gerald Valle, Department of Arizona**

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

This week, Gerald met with Congressman Greg Stanton’s aide to discuss several bills that are currently before the House. These include HR 2605, HR 2102, HR 3151, and HR 1412. The aide informed him that Rep. Stanton is a current cosponsor of HR 2102 and HR 1423. Gerald reiterated the importance of presenting these bills to the Congressman for his consideration and potential cosponsor-ship. The Congressman’s aide said that he had plans for several veteran-focused events scheduled for after the start of the new year, and Gerald confirmed he would forward the information about the events to the District Commander for wider distribution.

*Thank you, Gerald, 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!

*10 Tips for a Successful Meeting on Capitol Hill* and the *Legislative Meeting Worksheet* are now available for viewing and download on The Legion's website. You can find them and other legislative resources on the [Legislative Advocacy Resources & Toolkit page](#).

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).

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>***

## WASHINGTON CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

Washington Conference is scheduled for Feb 28-Mar 5 at the Washington Hilton!

March 2 – Legislative Commission Meeting and Commander's Call

March 3 – 'Know Before You Go' briefs and Hill visits

March 4 – National Commander's Testimony to Joint session of Congress



## UPCOMING CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS

As of 12/12, the following hearings are scheduled:

- Monday, December 15, 3:00 PM: House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, Subcommittee on Technology Modernization Oversight Hearing -- *"Ready, Set, Go-Live: Assessing VA's EHR Modernization Deployment Readiness"*
- Tuesday, December 16, 10:15 AM: House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity Oversight Hearing -- *"Detrimental Delays: Reviewing Payment Failures in VA's Education Programs"*

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](#)

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