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December 5, 2025 WEEKLY GRASSROOTS NEWSLETTER

This week, we are asking Legionnaires to contact Congress to urge them to *Include Section 1092 in the Fiscal Year 2026 National Defense Authorization Act!* This legislation would update and preserve the **Chaplains Hill Memorial at Arlington National Cemetery**. Due to unclear language in past NDAA's, Arlington National Cemetery officials have delayed updates and preservation efforts of the memorial. This legislation would ensure that previous mandates for maintaining the memorial are carried out.

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.

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

Kansas	257
Wisconsin	223
Tennessee	163
New York	104
Alaska	86

Texas	68
West Virginia	52
Oregon	43
Georgia	37
Indiana	37

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>

BILL WOULD RAISE VA COMPENSATION FOR SEVERELY INJURED VETS, SURVIVORS

This article's original publication can be found here



Wounded warrior amputees take a group photo before participating in the Bataan Memorial Death March at White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico, March 25, 2018. (Ken Scar/U.S. Army)

A bill in Congress would significantly increase the amount of disability compensation awarded to veterans with catastrophic injuries and survivors, but lawmakers are sparring over how to cover its estimated \$7 billion cost.

The Sharri Briley and Eric Edmundson Veterans Benefits Expansion Act, HR 6047, would raise the amount of disability compensation provided to these families by \$10,000 a year and increase payments for survivors by 1% each year for five years.

According to bill sponsor Rep. Tom Barrett, R-Mich., the boost would be the first non-inflation-related increase for these families since 1993 and would help families whose lives were upended by combat deaths or life-changing injuries.

“This bill is something that is long overdue and something we are going to continue to work on. Families like yours get left behind,” Barrett told survivors at a House Veterans Affairs Committee hearing Wednesday. “This bill represents a shift, trying to do something that’s never been done.”

The bill could affect more than 500,000 veteran families. To cover the estimated \$7 billion cost, House Republicans have proposed that veterans who purchase a second home through the VA’s mortgage program and have a 70% disability rating or lower pay a loan funding fee.

These veterans would not be required to pay the fee on their first VA home loan but would do so on subsequent loans.

Committee Chairman Rep. Mike Bost, R-Ill., said in the hearing that the funding proposal represents a path toward passing the bill into law.

“That’s an average of \$35 a month. No changes would be made to a veteran’s first home buying experience,” Bost said. “Opening the funding fee is a realistic way to get this done.”

Ranking Democrat Rep. Mark Takano of California said, however, that while he agrees additional support is vital for caregiver families and survivors, he won’t support the legislation as written.

“The aims of this bill are noble. Its potential to help survivors and catastrophically disabled veterans is real. But I can’t support the mechanism chosen to pay for it. ... Charging disabled veterans thousands of dollars in new fees to access their earned VA home loan benefit. This is a choice I can’t accept,” Takano said.

The bill is named for Sharri Briley, the widow of an Army Black Hawk helicopter pilot killed in Somalia in 1993, and Eric Edmundson, a former Army sergeant who suffered a grievous brain injury following a roadside bomb attack in Iraq in 2005.

Eric Edmundson, who can no longer speak and uses a wheelchair, sat next to his father Edgar Edmundson as the elder Edmundson gave a tearful testimony about his family's post-injury life.

"It took away his ability to speak, to walk, to live independently. It took away the future and it placed our family on a path to 24-hour care that has now lasted 20 years," Edgar Edmundson said.

He added that additional funding would give his son continued access to quality caregivers, additional respite care, adaptive equipment, transportation and support for staying engaged in the community.

"Catastrophic injuries do not get easier with age. They get harder. The original support, while appreciated, was never designed for round-the-clock care," he said. "Today my son is 45. He cannot speak for himself anymore. I am here to speak for him and I am asking you to work together now to find a mechanism to ensure that the time he has — that all severely injured veterans have — is filled with care and support they need."

Sharri Briley testified that since the death of her husband, Chief Warrant Officer 3 Donovan Briley, in the [Battle of Mogadishu](#), survivors' benefits have not been "meaningfully increased," even as the cost of housing, food and child care has climbed.

"A modest but consistent increase is a step in the right direction. It could help families manage groceries and medical expenses. Most importantly, it would signal that our government acknowledges and honors the ongoing sacrifices our spouses live with every day," she said.

A Veterans Affairs official who testified at the hearing said the department supports the intent of the legislation and would work with Congress to implement it. She added, however, that the VA is reviewing the proposed structure to cover the legislation's cost.

Kristina Keenan, director of the Veterans of Foreign War's national legislative service, said the VFW appreciates the sentiment behind the bill but is "very concerned for how this legislation would be financed."

"Through the 80-year history of the program, disabled veterans have always been exempted from the funding fee. They earned that exemption through their service and their injuries. HR 6047 would break that longstanding promise," Keenan said. "The VFW opposes reducing benefits of one group of veterans to expand those of another."

The bill must be voted on by the committee before it is forwarded to the full House for consideration. The Senate currently does not have its own version of the legislation.

LEGION WEIGHS IN ON MULTIPLE PIECES OF VETERAN-FRIENDLY LEGISLATION

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

Submitted written testimony outlines support for helping veterans land jobs in trucking industry, increase financial benefits for catastrophically disabled veterans and more.

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

First up was an SFR for the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, submitted Dec. 2 by Steven Betsch, an American Legion policy associate in the Veterans Employment and Education Division. The topic of the hearing was "Strengthening the Workforce of Veterans in America."

The SFR ([download statement here](#)) offered American Legion support on a number of critical issues including:

- Proposed changes to the TAPS program.
- Legislation to help veterans land jobs in the trucking industry, which is called for in H.R. 2954, the Veterans' Transition to Trucking Act of 2025.
- Strengthening career opportunities for veterans leaving military service as outlined in H.R. 4594, the Military Learning for Credit Act.
- H.R. 1458, the Veterans Education and Technical Skills (VETS) Opportunity Act, which expands access to high-quality, high-demand skilled trade and technical training programs for those who served.

On Dec. 3, American Legion senior legislative associate Bailey Bishop submitted testimony before the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs. The American Legion's testimony ([download statement here](#)) focuses on:

- H.R. 6047: Sharri Briley and Eric Edmundson Veterans Benefits Expansion Act, which the Legion supports with amendments. This legislation seeks to provide an overdue increase in financial benefits for survivors and catastrophically disabled veterans receiving care through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).
- H.R. 4077: GUARD Veterans' Healthcare Act, which the Legion supports as is. This would permit recovery from VA of costs from Medicare Advantage and Medicare prescription drug plans and to modify the authority for recovery by the United States of reasonable charges for certain care or services furnished to veterans for non-service-connected disabilities.

Additionally, American Legion health policy analyst Dr. Marie Black submitted a SFR on Dec. 3 before the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, which was considering legislation on "Medication Management in VA Health Care."

The American Legion's testimony ([download statement here](#)) focuses on:

- The Protect Veteran Access to Telemedicine Services Act. This would amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize certain VA health professionals to deliver or dispense controlled substances via telemedicine under certain conditions. Telemedicine dramatically expands access to care — especially for the 2.7 million veterans living in rural areas — by increasing the number of available prescribers and offering safe, secure medication without forcing veterans to spend hours on the road. The American Legion supports this draft legislation, with a proposed amendment, which urges Congress to permanently allow VA health professionals to practice telemedicine across state lines within the scope of their federal duties.
- The Written Informed Consent Act, which would direct the Secretary of VA to expand a Veterans Health Administration directive regarding informed consent to apply to certain types of medications, which often host FDA warnings for suicide risk.

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.

Ronald Chapman, Department of Ohio

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

Ronald recently met with Representative David Taylor at American Legion Post 288 in Williamsburg. He discussed the government shutdown and its impacts to veterans with the Congressman, as well as The Legion's legislative agenda. Specifically, they discussed the Major Richard Star Act and the Pay Our Troops Act.

Thank you, Ronald, 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 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>

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 12/5, the following hearings are scheduled:

- Wednesday, December 10, 10:00 AM: House Committee on Small Business Full Committee Hearing -- *"From Service to Startup: Empowering Veteran Entrepreneurs"*
- Wednesday, December 10, 2:15 PM: House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, Subcommittee on Health Oversight Hearing -- *"Putting Families First: Strengthening CHAMPVA for Survivors and Dependents"*
- Wednesday, December 10, 4:00 PM: Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs Hearing to Consider Pending Legislation
- Thursday, December 11, 10:00 AM: House Committee on Homeland Security Hearing -- *"Worldwide Threats to the Homeland"*

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](#)