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July 26, 2024

WEEKLY GRASSROOTS NEWSLETTER

This week, we are asking Legionnaires to contact Congress to request support for the *Contract our Veterans Act of 2024!* This act would require the Department of Defense to work with certain veteran-owned small businesses in procurement contracts. *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 105th 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](#).

SEN. MORAN STATEMENT ON VA BUDGET SHORTFALL

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

U.S. Senator Jerry Moran (Kan.) – ranking member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs

Committee – today released the following statement in response to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announcing a budget shortfall of almost \$15 billion:

“We need to make sure veterans receive the health care and benefits they need, and Congress has consistently provided for that.



“The Biden administration failed to account for this budget shortfall when preparing and presenting the President’s budget request. Instead, the White House and VA withheld this information for months.

“Moving forward, this administration must answer to Congress, veterans and the American people for this failure and for putting the health care and benefits for veterans and survivors at risk.”

U.S. GOVERNMENT TRANSITIONS VETERAN’S AFFAIRS, IRS TO LOGIN.GOV OR ID.ME

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

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs ([VA](#)) says it will implement a more streamlined login process for veterans to access benefit and healthcare services through [Login.gov](#) or [ID.me](#) accounts.

Pitched in a release as a simplifying measure that is part of the Biden-Harris administration's "comprehensive efforts to safeguard and protect veteran data and that of their beneficiaries," the shift to digital is only optional for now. After January 31, 2025, My HealtheVet user ID and passwords will be invalid for signing in to VA websites or apps. After September 30, 2025, DS Logon username and passwords will also become invalid.

Login.gov or ID.me accounts require multi-factor authentication, for which touch or [face biometrics](#) are an option. Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology and Chief Information Officer Kurt DeBene says "modern accounts like Login.gov or ID.me enhance the existing security and safety of online interactions, offering a robust defense against unauthorized access and [identity theft](#)." Digitization is "all about putting the veteran first."

The transition promises to offer increased protection for veterans and enhanced security compliance, in line with President Biden's Executive Order on improving [U.S. cybersecurity](#), which calls for robust security standards for identity verification and multi-factor authentication.

It also aims to provide a smoother experience that consolidates sign-in options by allowing Login.gov and ID.me accounts to be used across other government websites. VA estimates the transition will impact roughly 3 million veterans and other beneficiaries who do not yet use Login.gov or ID.me accounts to access VA's [online healthcare services](#). It says it is committed to working to communicate this change to all veterans, and will provide training and resources needed for staff and Veterans Service Organizations working to execute the transition by assisting veterans in navigating authentication options.

A mass digital transition to biometric ID verification platforms is in progress across the American administrative state. The U.S. Social Security Administration recently announced a switch to Login.gov as its [user authentication system](#). More than 5 million people with my Social Security accounts have already made the change. And the General Services Administration (GSA) is currently running a pilot of selfie biometrics for Login.gov onboarding. Participants in the pilot include TransUnion and [AuthenticID](#), [Socure](#), [Jumio](#), [LexisNexis](#), [Incode](#) and red violet.

IRS also moves to digital login for foreign asset reporting

A release from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) says the agency has enhanced identity authentication processes for financial institutions registering under the [Foreign Account](#)

[Tax Compliance Act](#) (FATCA), which requires U.S. taxpayers holding financial assets outside the country to report assets and financial accounts to the IRS. As of July 14, login through Login.gov or ID.me is required when signing in to access the FATCA Registration System. The IRS notes that the new authentication requirement complies with National Institute of Standards and Technology ([NIST](#)) [digital identity guidelines](#).

A previous contract between the IRS and ID.me for online tax returns generated controversy based on the use of [facial recognition and biometric authentication](#), prompting a search for alternative identity verification measures. Login.gov is apparently that alternative.



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.

Brian Heyman, California

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

Brian met with the office of Young Kim (CA-04), which included Rep. Kim and her staff. He, along with several other representatives of different Veteran Service Organizations from the Orange County area, regularly meets with Rep. Kim's office to discuss issues and bills related to veterans.

Thank you, Brian, 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.

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 or 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 24-28th. The **Legislative Commission meeting will be held on Saturday August 24th 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!

On Wednesday, July 24, 2024, The Legislative Division met with the House Veteran Affairs Committee (HVAC) Minority to discuss the upcoming committee's legislative agenda, primarily focused on bills that the Legion supports, such as The Guard and Reserve GI Bill Parity Act and The Warriors to Workforce Act. These bills have thankfully moved to the full committee. According to committee staff members, HVAC will likely have the full committee markup moved to the week of September 16. They also stated that the earliest time the House votes on these bills is probably after the election. Though this is much later than the Legion would like, the Legislative Division will continue to advocate to pass these critical pieces of legislation into law.

Leg Division briefed the legislative program at the Leading Candidates' Orientation and at the Membership Workshop in Indy this week. The Leading Candidates are very interested in Grassroots participation and Action Alert responses. Get the word out to your Departments to highlight these activities!



UPCOMING CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS

As of Friday, July 26, 2024, the following hearings are scheduled:

- July 30, 9:30 AM EST: Senate Armed Services Committee--Full Committee hearing on the findings and recommendations of the Commission on the National Defense Strategy.
- July 30, 10:15 AM EST: House Veterans Affairs Committee--Full Committee hearing on "Accountable or Absent?: Examining VA Leadership Under the Biden Administration."
- July 30, 1:30 PM EST: House Veterans Affairs Committee--Subcommittee on Health hearing on "Life After Limb Loss: Examining VA Amputee Prosthetics Care."

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](#)