



★ ★ ★ LEGISLATIVE WEEKLY ★ ★ ★

November 14, 2025

WEEKLY GRASSROOTS NEWSLETTER

This week, we are asking Legionnaires to contact Congress to urge them to pass the *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	459
Wisconsin	362
Tennessee	217
New York	162

West Virginia	115
Texas	98
Florida	84
Virginia	84
Alaska	78
Indiana	73

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>

GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN INFORMATION



At around 10:00 pm on Wednesday, November 12, the longest shutdown in U.S. history [came to an end after 43 days](#). President Donald Trump signed legislation that reopened

the federal government after the House of Representatives voted 222-209 earlier that evening on the funding package.

American Legion National Commander Dan K. Wiley praised members of Congress for their work in ending the longest-ever government shutdown.

“The American Legion is grateful that members of Congress finally found a solution to the shutdown. While this is great news for veterans, military members and their families, it is only a temporary solution as this Continuing Resolution expires Jan. 30. We are grateful that the new agreement fully funds the Department of Veterans Affairs through 2026. However, that does not go far enough, leaving our military members, federal workers and others in limbo. It’s time for Congress to approve a proper budget for the entire year.”

“Additionally, as Congress winds down this session, lawmakers must prioritize legislation such as the Major Richard Star Act, Pay Our Troops Act and other bills that deliver on the promises made to our nation’s veterans and military families.” You can find the link to his statement [here](#).

GOVERNMENT REOPENS: WHAT EVERY SERVICE MEMBER AND VETERAN NEEDS TO KNOW RIGHT NOW

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

After a record 43-day federal government shutdown, President Trump has signed a funding bill that reopens the government and sends hundreds of thousands of federal employees back to work. The bill funds most agencies at current levels through January 30, 2026, while providing full-year funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Agriculture, military construction and Congress.

Here’s what the next 72 hours are expected to look like for service members, families, and veterans, based on what major outlets and government statements are reporting today.

Federal Workers Back on the Job — and Back Pay Starting to Flow

The White House budget office has instructed furloughed federal employees to report back to work starting Thursday, kicking off a rapid “reboot” of federal operations.

Roughly 670,000 federal workers were furloughed and another 730,000 worked without pay during the shutdown; the new law guarantees back pay for all of them. Agencies are aiming to process payroll quickly, with several outlets reporting that paychecks for furloughed workers could start arriving by this weekend, though some employees may see delays depending on agency and pay systems.

For military families with federal civilian spouses, this means:

- Expect normal hours and services at most on-base and nearby federal offices to resume over the next few days.
- Back pay should arrive automatically, but it's worth monitoring LES/pay statements closely and flagging any issues to your agency or HR office as soon as systems are back online.

What It Means for Troops, PCS, and Separations

Throughout the shutdown, the Pentagon shifted funds and issued temporary policies to keep pay flowing and protect benefits, including short-term extensions for troops nearing separation. The Army extended some soldiers by 45 days, and the Air Force and Space Force extended a smaller group by 60 days to preserve pay and benefits during the funding lapse.

With the government now reopening, here's what to expect in the next 72 hours:

- Pay: Regular military pay should continue without interruption; any oddities in mid-month pay that cropped up during the shutdown are likely to be corrected as finance offices catch up.
- Separations/retirements: Those who were involuntarily extended should start to see updated separation timelines once personnel offices fully reopen. If you were affected, plan to check in with your S1, MPF, or transition office by early next week.
- PCS orders & travel: Moves that were frozen or delayed should begin working through the pipeline again, but there may be a backlog. If you had PCS orders on hold, contact your installation transportation or assignments office for updated guidance.

On-base quality-of-life services that were under threat if the shutdown continued, like commissaries and some dining facilities, should now avoid the worst-case closure scenarios, though it may take a few days for staffing and supply chains to fully normalize.

VA Care and Benefits: Mostly Stable

Because VA has its own advance appropriations and now receives full-year funding in the new spending package, core services such as health care and disability compensation continued during the shutdown and are now fully funded for the rest of the fiscal year.

Key points for the next 72 hours and beyond:

- Health care: VA medical centers and clinics remain open. Any appointments that were postponed due to local staffing or shutdown-related disruptions should start to be rescheduled as administrators get clear guidance and staffing stabilizes.

- Disability and GI Bill payments: Existing benefits appear to have continued, but some veterans felt uncertainty around new claims and appeals during the shutdown. That work will now restart, with a risk of backlogs as staff dig out from six weeks of limited operations.
- VA staffing: The Senate's VA spending bill ties funding to specific staffing targets to prevent deep workforce cuts, even as the department pursues reorganization. That should help stabilize staffing in critical care and benefits roles.

If you have a pending claim, appeal, or community-care referral, the next 72 hours will mostly be about VA employees returning, logging back into systems, and triaging the stack of work that accumulated during the shutdown.

SNAP, SBA Loans, and Other Benefits Many Military Families Rely On

The reopening also flips the switch back on for several programs that directly affect military and veteran families:

- SNAP (food stamps): The administration has said full SNAP benefits will be restored very quickly, with some reports indicating distributions within 24 hours of reopening and most states catching up within a few days.
- SBA loans and veteran small business support: The Small Business Administration has continued to provide support during the shutdown and will continue to process new loans and assistance, which is a big deal for veteran-owned businesses that have felt stuck in limbo during the shutdown.
- Other federal aid: The funding bill extends Agriculture and nutrition programs through September 2026, ending short-term uncertainty for food assistance and rural programs heavily used by military families and veterans.

If your household uses SNAP, WIC, SBA loans, or similar programs, you should start seeing agencies update websites, hotlines, and local offices with fresh guidance over the next couple of days.

Travel, TSA, and “Everyday” Federal Services

Air travelers have felt the shutdown acutely. Staffing shortages among unpaid air traffic controllers and TSA officers have already produced widespread delays and cancellations; experts warn that even with the government back open, it could take weeks for the system to fully recover, including into the Thanksgiving period.

For the next 72 hours, assume:

- Continued delays and cancellations as airlines and the FAA work through reduced flight schedules.

- Gradual reopening of national parks, museums, and other federal sites; some Washington, D.C. museums are targeting reopening by early next week, not immediately.

What to Do Right Now

For military members and veterans, the practical moves over the next few days are straightforward:

- Monitor your pay and benefits dashboards (MyPay, VA.gov, eBenefits, etc.) for updates and corrections.
- Call your local VA clinic or hospital if you had an appointment canceled or delayed — slots will go fast as they clear the backlog.
- If you were extended on active duty due to the shutdown, make an appointment with your career counselor or transition office to confirm your updated timeline.
- If you rely on SNAP or other federal assistance, watch for state notices about restored benefits and disbursement dates.
- If you're a veteran small business owner, reconnect with your SBA district office or small business counselor as loan and certification pipelines reopen.

The shutdown is over — but for troops, families, and veterans, the next 72 hours are about making sure systems really catch up with the promises now written into law.

LEGION-BACKED LEGISLATION PASSED INTO LAW

The following American Legion backed provisions which were included in the final FY26 MilCon/VA Appropriations bill: [See full text here](#)

Second Amendment Protections (Sec. 413) – Prohibits the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) from submitting a veteran or beneficiary's name to the FBI's NICS list without a judge's consent that they are a danger to themselves or others, affording veterans with fiduciaries the due process rights they have earned.

Emergency Transportation Protections (Sec. 259) – Prohibits the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) from cutting reimbursements for private ground and air ambulatory emergency transportation services in response to the following rule: "Changes in Rates VA Pays for Special Modes of Transportation" (88 Fed. Reg. 10032), effectively protecting rural and remote veterans' access to lifesaving emergency care.

SENATE-PASSED SPENDING DEAL SETS VA STAFFING TARGETS AMID REORGANIZATION



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

A Senate-passed spending plan to end the longest government shutdown includes bills that would keep the Department of Veterans Affairs funded through the rest of the fiscal year. The fiscal 2026 spending bill “minibus” passed by the Senate on Monday gives the [VA \\$133 billion in discretionary spending](#) — about a 3% increase compared to last year.

The Senate also approved FY 2026 funding for the Agriculture Department, military construction and the legislative branch. Lawmakers have included several provisions to ensure the VA doesn't shed too many employees, as part of its ongoing agency reorganization plans.

The VA [previously planned](#) to eliminate 83,000 positions this year. Those plans involved cutting 20,000 clinical staff from the Veterans Health Administration, including nurses and other frontline medical staff. The department, however, scrapped plans for a department-wide reduction in force, and instead planned to [eliminate 30,000 positions](#) by the end of fiscal 2025, largely through attrition.

The spending bill gives the VA 90 days to provide the House and Senate appropriations committees with a staffing model “that will ensure timely, high-quality delivery of

healthcare, benefits, and other services.” “The department is directed to maintain staffing levels to facilitate the department’s own goals,” lawmakers wrote.

On the health care side of VA’s operations, those targets include veterans waiting no longer than 20 days for primary and mental health care appointments, and no more than 28 days for specialty care appointments. The Veterans Benefits Administration must also ensure that it has enough employees to adjudicate benefits claims within 125 days.

The spending bill specifically bars the VA from reducing staffing levels, hours of operation or services at the Veterans Crisis Line or any of its other suicide prevention programs.

Former VCL employees told the [Senate VA Committee this summer](#) that hotline employees are often overwhelmed juggling multiple incoming texts and web chats. Lawmakers wrote that the Veterans Crisis Line “is often the first place a veteran will turn to in a moment of crisis,” and that they are “concerned about the continued functionality, accessibility, and performance of the VCL.”

The VA must also provide the House and Senate appropriations committees with an update on VCL staffing levels and capacity to respond to incoming calls. The report must also include call answer rates, average wait times and referrals to suicide prevention coordinators.

The spending bill also prohibits the VA from terminating any contract over \$10 million, unless the VA provides advanced notice to the House and Senate committees, explaining how the department plans to replace the services in the contract targeted for elimination, and whether ending the contract would result in any change in

The Senate-passed spending bill would give the VA \$3.4 billion to resume the rollout of its new Electronic Health Record. The funds will go toward deploying the new EHR to 13 new locations in 2026, as well as “optimization” of the six sites already using the new EHR. The VA [paused its EHR deployment schedule](#) in April 2023, and used the “reset” period to address problems at sites already using the system.

The department currently plans to roll out the new EHR to 27 sites in 2027, but it’s still far away from fully deploying the new system to about 170 VA medical centers across the country. The Defense Department completed its own rollout of the same health record system last year. Lawmakers are holding onto nearly a third of the EHR modernization funds until July 2026 and will only release the money once the VA has demonstrated that the project is back on track.

Congress will release 30% of the EHR modernization funds to the VA once it has certified that it has seen “at least four consecutive successful site deployments without any incidents of a delay in care or patient harm.”

To receive these funds, the VA must also give Congress an updated lifecycle cost estimate for the new EHR, a facility-by-facility deployment schedule, projected staffing levels and whether sites already using the new EHR are meeting baseline productivity targets. VA's EHR deployment plans for fiscal 2026 focus on medical facilities in Michigan, Ohio and Indiana — although go-lives are also planned in Kentucky and Alaska that year.

Lawmakers wrote that they are “encouraged by deployment activities” at some of the 2026 EHR sites. However, they wrote that “Congress remains vigilant of potential usability problems that have led to or contributed to instances of patient harm and reduced employee productivity.”

HOW SOON COULD FEDERAL WORKERS BE PAID AFTER THE GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN ENDS?

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

After lawmakers reached a deal to end the longest federal shutdown in U.S. history, hundreds of thousands of government workers who haven't been paid are wondering when their paychecks could finally arrive.

The House of Representatives on Wednesday approved a Senate-passed funding package, which President Trump signed into law, ending the 43-day-long shutdown.

Now that the funding bill has passed and the government is open again, federal workers are entitled to back pay under the Government Employee Fair Treatment Act of 2019. The law covers both furloughed employees and those required to work without pay, requiring agencies to issue retroactive payments as soon as possible rather than waiting for scheduled pay dates.

When will federal workers get paid?

Some federal employees will receive back pay as soon as Sunday, according to a memo from the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB), whose contents were first reported by Semafor. Other workers will have to wait until Wednesday, Nov. 19 to receive paychecks. The White House confirmed the memo's contents to CBS News.

OMB, which laid out an agency-by-agency pay schedule for workers, is aiming to make all federal workers whole by Nov. 19, and instructed agencies to make payments to workers "expeditiously and accurately," according to the memo.

Workers' first post-shutdown paychecks will cover the period from Oct. 1 to Nov. 1, while pay for days worked after Nov. 1 will come later.

The shutdown took a deep financial toll on federal workers, with some turning to bank loans to cover bills. About 1.4 million employees missed their first full paychecks on Oct. 24 after receiving only partial pay on Oct. 10.

The Navy Federal Credit Union, which serves military personnel, said it has seen a surge in interest for its no-interest loans since the shutdown began.

"More than 350,000 members enrolled for assistance — 18 times the enrollment in the 2018-19 shutdown," said Heather Long, the credit union's chief economist, in an email. "It's one of many signs of how painful and uncertain this shutdown has been for many hard-working families."

Under the 2019 law, workers who miss paychecks during a lapse in federal funding must be paid retroactively as soon as the shutdown ends. It directs agencies to issue back pay "at the earliest date possible after the lapse in appropriations ends, regardless of scheduled pay dates."

That's what happened after the 2018–19 shutdown, said Rachel Snyderman, managing director of economic policy at the Bipartisan Policy Center, a Washington, D.C.-based think tank.

"In prior shutdowns, back pay has been paid at the earliest date possible after appropriations have been passed, regardless of scheduled pay dates," she told CBS News. "At this time, we have every indication that this would move forward."

At least 670,000 federal employees were furloughed, while roughly 730,000 worked without pay throughout the shutdown, according to the Bipartisan Policy Center. If the shutdown had lasted through December 1, the group estimates about 4.5 million paychecks — totaling \$21 billion — would have been delayed.

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.

Al Jensen, Department of Washington

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

Al has attended many veteran roundtable meetings held by Rep. Rick Larsen and his staff. After hearing feedback from Al and the other veterans in attendance, Congressman Larsen wrote Doug Collins, Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs, a letter outlining the results of the 5 roundtables he held during the month. These issues include concerns about access to community care, veteran homelessness, and access to healthcare in rural areas. You can access the report Congressman Larsen wrote in response to his veteran town halls [here](#).

Thank you, Al, 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 11/13, the following hearings are scheduled:

- Thursday, November 20, 12:00 PM: House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs Oversight Hearing -- *"Improving Outcomes for Disabled Veterans: Oversight of VA's Medical Disability Examination Office"*

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](#)