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October 31, 2025
WEEKLY GRASSROOTS NEWSLETTER

This week, we are asking Legionnaires to contact Congress to urge them to pass the *Pay Our Troops Act!* This legislation ensures that members of the Armed Services will be paid in the event of a government shutdown.

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	506
Wisconsin	401
New York	334
Tennessee	285
Florida	225

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

The American Legion's Government Affairs office is working diligently to keep the Legion Family updated on news related to the government shutdown, which has been in effect since October 1. The most recent vote in the Senate on 10/22 failed 54-46.

On October 14th, The American Legion participated in a joint press conference with other MSO/VSOs to call on Congress to open government and pass the Pay Our Troops Act. You can watch Executive Director Mario Marquez's remarks [here](#).

Click [here](#) to watch National Commander Dan Wiley discuss the impact of the shutdown.

You can visit the Department of Veterans Affairs website to view the VA contingency plan [here](#). It breaks down what services are impacted by the shutdown, as well as what services are operating as normal.



VETERANS FIELD GUIDE TO GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN



The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is committed to provide quality, consistent care and services to Veterans, families, Caregivers, and Survivors. VA's mission allows no exception to this standard even when operations are limited by the absence of appropriations (commonly known as a "Government shutdown").



SERVICES TO VETERANS NOT IMPACTED:



VA Medical Centers, Outpatient Clinics, and Vet Centers will be open as usual and providing all services.



VA benefits will continue to be processed and delivered, including compensation, pension, education, and housing benefits.



Burials will continue at VA national cemeteries. Applications for headstones, markers, and burial benefits processing will continue.



The Board of Veterans' Appeals will continue decisions on Veterans' cases.



Call Centers: VA's primary call center (1-800-MyVA411) and the Veterans Crisis Line (Dial 988, Press 1) will remain open 24/7.



Suicide prevention programs, homelessness services, and caregiver support will continue.



HAVE A QUESTION? CALL US!

The one number all Veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors can use to access VA resources 24 hours-a-day, 365 days-a-year.

1-800-MYVA411 (1-800-698-2411)



SERVICES TO VETERANS IMPACTED:



VA will cease providing transition program assistance and career counseling.



Call Centers: VA's GI Bill (1-888-GIBILL-1) and National Cemetery Applicant Assistance (1-800-697-6947) hotlines will be closed.



VA benefits regional offices will be closed.



Public Affairs and outreach to Veterans will cease, including social media, VetResources emails, and responses to press inquiries.



No grounds maintenance or placement of permanent headstones at VA cemeteries. Applications for pre-need burial at VA cemeteries will not be processed. No printing of new Presidential Memorial Certificates.



No outreach to state, county, tribal, municipal, faith-based, and community-based partners by VA Central Office.

In the event of a prolonged shutdown, VA will continue to review and update its plan in conjunction with the applicable legal requirements and circumstances. Please visit www.whitehouse.gov/omb/ or www.VA.gov for updated information.




U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Download the VA Welcome Kit www.va.gov/welcome-kit/
Subscribe to #VetResources www.usa.gov/veteransnews/
Veterans Crisis Line: Dial 988, then Press 1
Call 1-800-MyVA411 (1-800-698-2411) or visit <https://www.va.gov/crisisline/>

<https://department.va.gov/contingency-planning/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2025/09/Veteran-Field-Guide-Govt-Shutdown.pdf>

SHUTDOWN-ENDING STOPGAP WILL HAVE TO MOVE FIRST IN ANY DEAL, THUNE SAYS

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

Senate Majority Leader John Thune struck a cautionary note Thursday as bipartisan talks that could end the 30-day government shutdown kick into a higher gear, warning

that a deal to advance full-year spending bills would move forward only after Democrats agree to a stopgap measure reopening federal agencies.

Thune told reporters it would likely take days, if not weeks, for the Senate to pass a package of larger spending bills.

“Even if you’ve got consent it’s still going to take a while to move those bills across the floor so we’ve got to reopen the government and then we’ll have a normal appropriations process,” he said.

The comments come amid a new flurry of rank-and-file talks aimed at breaking the monthlong impasse. Part of those bipartisan discussions have focused on how to move fiscal 2026 spending bills, with some appropriators suggesting that a package of full-year-bills could advance as a show of good faith before the Senate passes a shutdown-ending stopgap.

Both Thune and Speaker Mike Johnson rejected that idea Thursday, with the top House leader saying at a news conference that Republicans “have one purpose, and that is, turning this thing back on.”

“All those other efforts or deviations, it’s political games,” he said.

What has been offered by Republicans, as [POLITICO previously reported](#), is to quickly move two packages of spending bills once the government is reopened.

The first would include the Agriculture-FDA, Military Construction-VA and Legislative Branch bills. The second would include the Defense and Labor-HHS measures, as well as potentially Transportation-HUD and Commerce-Justice-Science funding. Some senators have discussed potentially trying to attach the first package, which has already passed the Senate, to a stopgap bill.

How soon any of this could come together remains a mystery. Republicans believe Democrats are on the cusp of agreeing to end the shutdown as soon as next week, and Thune, during a Thursday morning interview with CNBC, pointed to Tuesday’s off-year elections as a possible pivot point where the dynamic could shift on Capitol Hill.

Notching a bipartisan appropriations deal, however, won’t address Democrats’ central shutdown demand: an extension of expiring Affordable Care Act health insurance subsidies.

Thune has offered Democrats a vote on the ACA subsidies as well as a meeting with President Donald Trump as soon as next week. But Democrats have called that insufficient, and some are starting to float a “working group” to address the issue.

Thune left the door open Thursday to launching an ACA working group after the government reopens but warned that he’s “not a big fan of gangs.” Instead, he said, “I’m kind of a fan of regular order” — where committees with expertise in the matters being negotiated take the lead.

But he acknowledged members of both parties are “interested” in a working group and said he’s “open” to the idea.

TRICARE TO INCREASE PHARMACY COPAYMENTS, ADD NEW BENEFITS IN 2026

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



Tricare health beneficiaries who fill prescriptions outside a military health facility will pay more for medications next year, but they will also have expanded access to new

treatments for conditions like lung cancer and chronic back pain, under an announcement made by the federal government Tuesday.

According to a notice in the Federal Register, most Tricare prescription copayments for medications purchased at retail pharmacies and through the Tricare mail-order pharmacy will increase beginning Jan. 1.

In 2026, the rates for 30-day retail prescriptions will remain at \$16 for generic drugs, but they will increase to \$48 for brand-name medications. Ninety-day mail-order prescriptions will cost \$14 for generic drugs and \$44 for branded prescriptions. Non-formulary drugs will be \$85 for the 30-day retail or 90-day mail-order prescriptions.

Prescriptions filled at military hospitals or clinics will continue to be available at no cost to patients, and active-duty personnel still won't pay cost-shares or copays at retail pharmacies for covered medications.

The new rates reflect a 12% to 15.8% rise over the current copays, which were set at the start of 2024. The increase is part of a plan initiated in 2018 by Congress and the Defense Department to increase the share patients pay for their medical services through the military health program.

In addition to the increase in retail pharmacy costs, Tricare will introduce new coverage for some procedures, according to the announcement. Those include: radiofrequency ablation for uterine fibroids; cryosurgery for lung cancer or other cancers that have metastasized to the lungs; coronary calcium tests for patients suspected of having heart disease; and basivertebral nerve ablation for patients with chronic back pain.

Tricare also plans to cover the cost of electric devices, known as transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation, or TENS units, to address post-operative pain. Tricare will allow patients who meet the criteria for a likelihood of developing certain types of cancer to have prophylactic surgeries, including mastectomies and hysterectomies.

The military health program also will no longer require some dependents who have lost their hearing to use hearing aids for at least three to six months before being eligible for cochlear implants, according to the announcement.

Tricare will continue to cover monoclonal antibody drugs for early treatment of Alzheimer's disease — a benefit it began last year. Patients must receive pre-authorization to receive the medication and must undergo testing to determine they have the condition.

Also beginning next year, active-duty family members and retirees and their eligible family members who live in Tampa, Florida, or Atlanta will be able to enroll in a [new Tricare Prime option](#) managed by CareSource Military and Veterans.

The pilot, which will run through 2029, provides a new managed care program for military families beyond military treatment facilities or Tricare managed by Humana Government Business, the contractor for the East Region.

Beneficiaries interested in enrolling in the new program will be able to do so during Tricare Open Season, set for Nov. 10 through Dec. 9. During that time frame, patients also may switch between Tricare Prime and Tricare Select or enroll in the Federal Dental and Vision Insurance program. Open season for FEDVIP closes Dec. 8.

“Tricare Prime Atlanta and Tricare Prime Tampa represent an innovative approach to advance access to care, enhance the patient experience, and strive for better health outcomes,” Dr. David Krulak, director of the Tricare Health Plan at the Defense Health Agency, said in a statement when the pilot was announced May 7. “The data we get from this demonstration will inform future Tricare innovations nationwide.”

RECONCILIATION, PROCUREMENT FUNDING TAPPED TO PAY TROOPS

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

The funding to pay servicemembers on Friday despite the government shutdown will come from a mix of reconciliation funding, weapons-buying money and research accounts, a senior administration official confirmed Wednesday.

Specifically, the Trump administration is taking \$2.5 billion from the budget reconciliation law ([PL 119-21](#)), \$1.4 billion from procurement funding and \$1.4 billion from unspecified research and development projects, the official confirmed.

The confirmation comes after CQ [reported](#) Tuesday that Pentagon officials had notified appropriators that they planned to tap unobligated defense funding in order to make payroll Friday without elaborating on where the funding would come from.

The exact funding breakdown was first reported by Axios, which said that the reconciliation funding was part of the \$2.9 billion pot that was intended to supplement basic allowance for housing funding and the procurement funding had been slated for Navy shipbuilding.

Friday will mark the second time the Trump administration is dipping into unrelated Pentagon funding to pay troops during the government shutdown that started 29 days ago.

The first time, for the Oct. 15 payday, the Pentagon said it [transferred](#) \$8 billion from unobligated research and development funding.

While some of those dollars were expected to be left over to help cover Friday's payday, it was previously unclear where the rest of the funding would come from.

In recent days, top administration officials, including Vice President [JD Vance](#), vowed troops would get paid Friday but did not elaborate on how.

The Pentagon has not responded to six requests for comment on Friday's military payday beyond acknowledging once that it received an email.

While critics have said the Trump administration is violating the law by moving around funding to pay troops during a shutdown, lawmakers, who widely support the general goal of paying troops, have not mounted any significant opposition.

A late September [report](#) from the Congressional Budget Office suggested that the Pentagon pay troops during a shutdown with some of the roughly \$150 billion it received under the sweeping reconciliation bill.

Although the reconciliation money did not fund the first round of military paychecks, the Coast Guard — which falls under the Department of Homeland Security — did use reconciliation funding for its Oct. 15 checks.

While administration officials projected confidence about Friday's military pay, they have warned they could run out of funding for the Nov. 15 troop payday.

"I think we'll be able to pay them beginning in November," Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said Sunday on CBS News' "Face the Nation." "But by Nov. 15, our troops and servicemembers who are willing to risk their lives aren't going to be able to get paid."

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.

[Frederic Kinkin, Virginia](#)

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

This month, Frederic attended the American Legion Post 110 (Virginia Beach) monthly meeting with Congresswoman Jen Kiggans in attendance. At the meeting, the Congresswoman provided an update on the government shutdown and how it impacts veterans' issues.

Thank you, Frederic, 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>



UPCOMING CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS

As of 10/30, the following hearings are scheduled:

- Tuesday, November 4, 9:30 AM: Senate Committee on Armed Services full committee nomination hearing -- *“To Consider the Nominations of: Mr. Austin J. Dahmer to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy, Plans, and Capabilities Honorable Robert P. Kadlec to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear Deterrence, Chemical, and Biological Defense Policy and Programs; and Mr. Michael J. Borders, Jr. to be Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Energy, Installations, and Environment”*
- Wednesday, November 5, 4:00 PM: Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs hearing -- *“A Grateful Nation: Maximizing Veterans’ Success after Service”*
- Thursday, November 6, 9:30 AM: Senate Committee on Armed Services full committee nomination hearing -- *“To consider the nominations of: Mr. Michael D. Payne to be Director of Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation, Department of Defense; Mr. Alexander J. Velez-Green to be Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy; Mr. Timothy D. Dill to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs; and Dr. Maurice L. Todd to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Readiness”*

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](#)