Womack introduces Flag protection bill

Rep. Steve Womack introduced a joint resolution to restore Congress's constitutional authority to ban the desecration of the United States flag. **Read more**

Recent Legion news

- **Veterans, Legionnaires among newest members of Congress**
- **New bill provides VA accountability**
- **Suicide prevention legislation now law**
- **House bill would ensure VA mandatory funding**
- **Fort Hood victims deserve Purple Hearts**
- **Legion opposes cuts to military compensation**

Related articles

- **Keystone Pipeline bill passes key Senate vote**
- **Opposition rises against McCain's Jones Act Amendment**
- **House measure defies Obama on immigrants**
- **HASC chair predicts raise in military spending cap**
- **Bill would adjust employer health-care mandate and help veterans**
- **Legislation aims to reclaim some VA management bonuses**
- **15 members of HASC are OIF/OEF veterans**
- **Doctor lawmaker ready to triage compensation reforms**
- **Senate bill would expand national park access for disabled veterans**
- **House passes Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention bill**
- **Isakson to chair 114th Congress SVAC**
- **McCain savors SASC 'dream job'**

LEGISLATIVE QUESTION OF THE WEEK

Q: Although President Obama has threatened to veto it, HR 3, the Legion-supported bill to approve the long-delayed Keystone XL pipeline, was recently passed by the House and sent to the Senate for action; what will happen now in Congress and how would this infrastructure project benefit America?

A: SEE THE ANSWER AND SUBMIT YOUR QUESTION

BE HEARD ON THE HILL

Congress now offers a website where American Legion members can weigh in on legislative action.

VISIT THE CITIZEN COSPONSOR PROJECT

Upcoming congressional hearings

Wednesday, Jan. 21 at 10:30 a.m.
House Committee on Veterans Affairs
"Building a Better VA: Assessing Ongoing Major Construction Management Problems within the Department"
Testifying for the Legion: Roscoe Butler, deputy director for health, Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Division

Thursday, Jan. 22 at 8 a.m.
House Committee on Veterans Affairs
Subcommittee on Health
Roundtable on the subcommittee's interests, goals and priorities for the First Session of the 114th Congress

Thursday, Jan. 22 at 10:30 a.m.
House Committee on Veterans Affairs
Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs
"Veterans' Dilemma: Navigating the Appeals System for Veterans Claims"
Testifying for the Legion: Zachary Hearn, deputy director for benefits, Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Division

For the Record:
The VA scandal of 2014, which resulted in the resignation of VA Secretary Eric Shinseki and passage of the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act, is chronicled in the article "Casualties of Care," published in the January 2015 issue of The American Legion Magazine: **Read the article**

January 20, 2015, Issue No. 034; **Subscribe to The American Legion Legislative Update.**

Privatizing VA is 'shortsighted' concept

Legion's Louis Celli tells House subcommitteee that outsourcing veterans' health care would be far more costly and fail the special needs of many patients. Read more

Recent Legion news

- **Legion recommends TAP improvements**
- **VA needs to keep informal claims process**
- **Legion to host National Credentialing Summit**
- **VA claims appeals can be 'adjudication purgatory'**
- **VA construction issues threaten operations nationwide**

Related articles

- **Military retirement commission unveils recommendations**
- **Chuck Hagel's departure**
- **Obama wants sequestration to end**
- **The Pentagon's new fiscal cliff**
- **Retired generals push to end sequestration**
- **McDonald criticized during hearing on VA bonuses**
- **Lawmakers to attend VA summit on health care**
- **Bill advances on sick leave for veterans**

LEGISLATIVE QUESTION OF THE WEEK

Q: With the return of so many veterans from the wars Iraq and Afghanistan, what is The American Legion doing to protect the GI Bill education benefits?

A: SEE THE ANSWER AND SUBMIT YOUR QUESTION

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VISIT THE CITIZEN COSPONSOR PROJECT

Upcoming congressional hearings

Tuesday, Feb. 3 at 9:30 a.m.
Senate Committee on Armed Services
"Findings of the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission"

Wednesday, Feb. 4 at 9:30 a.m.
Senate Committee on Armed Services
Hearing to consider the nomination of Ashton B. Carter for Secretary of Defense

Wednesday, Feb. 11 at 10:30 a.m.
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
"U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Budget Request for Fiscal Year 2016"

For the Record:
The Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission issued its final report on Jan. 28, 2015, with recommendations for changing the structure of military retirement benefits. The report, as well as the commission's interim report of June 2014, can be downloaded at this website: **Read the report**

THE AMERICAN LEGION
LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Fort Hood victims to be awarded Purple Hearts

Servicemembers who were killed or injured during the Fort Hood attack in 2009 will be awarded the Purple Heart. **Read more**

Recent Legion news

- **Helm: 'End game' needed for military action against ISIL**
- **Legion to help restore West LA campus mission**
- **Legion proposes changes to veterans training program**
- **Legion supports quadrennial review for VA**
- **Legion reviewing military compensation, benefits recommendations**

Related articles

- **Obama signs the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention Act**
- **White House may slow down Afghanistan troop withdrawal**
- **U.S. commander wants more drawdown flexibility in Afghanistan**
- **Proposal would restrict GI Bill funding to for-profit colleges**
- **Senate bill sets VA health standards for women**
- **Banks to pay troops in foreclosure case**
- **Senators seek improvements to homeless veteran programs**
- **Pentagon wants more funding for family programs**

LEGISLATIVE QUESTION OF THE WEEK

Q: Why is VA asking Congress to let them take money out of the Choice Card accounts? How does The American Legion feel about this?

A: SEE THE ANSWER AND SUBMIT YOUR QUESTION

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VISIT THE CITIZEN COSPONSOR PROJECT

Upcoming congressional hearings

Wednesday, Feb. 25 at 10 a.m.
"Joint Hearing of the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees to receive the Legislative Presentation of The American Legion"
Testifying for the Legion: Michael D. Helm, National Commander

Thursday, Feb. 26 at 9:30 a.m.
Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs
"Department of Veterans Affairs Budget"
Testifying for the Legion: Ian de Planque, Legislative Director

Thursday, Feb. 26 at 12:30 p.m.
House Minority Leader Roundtable: Veterans service organizations legislative priorities for the 114th Congress
Participating for the Legion: Verna Jones, Executive Director in Washington

Friday, Feb. 27 at 7:30 a.m.
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Veteran Leadership Roundtable

(Note: Congress is in recess Feb. 16-20)

For the Record:
President Obama sent to Capitol Hill his proposal for congressional authorization of his military campaign against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). The proposed joint resolution, if passed, would extend for three years. Read the text of the resolution **here**

February 18, 2015, Issue No. 036; **Subscribe to The American Legion Legislative Update.**

THE AMERICAN LEGION
LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Helm to Congress: We face 'historic opportunities'

Helm emphasizes transition assistance, better treatment for PTSD and TBI in hearing before House and Senate committees. Read more

Recent Legion news

- **Miller praises Legion for taking on VA scandal**
- **Helm: Congress needs to act, not just listen**
- **Senate VA leaders lay out goals, hopes to Legion**
- **Michaud receives Distinguished Public Service Award**
- **Helping lawful immigrants prepare for citizenship**
- **Plans for Desert Storm memorial move forward**
- **SAL members go to annual Washington Conference**

Articles of interest:

- **Caregivers push for expanded benefits**
- **DHS funding battle reveals a Republican House divided**
- **Why Republicans aren't scared by the politics of immigration**
- **Chris Kyle Medal of Honor bill gets some pushback**
- **Budget cuts and other changes are hurting troop morale**
- **Gallup poll: Americans split on defense spending**

LEGISLATIVE QUESTION OF THE WEEK

Q: What is the current status of the Flag Protection Amendment in the 114th Congress?

A: SEE THE ANSWER AND SUBMIT YOUR QUESTION

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VISIT THE CITIZEN COSPONSOR PROJECT

Upcoming congressional hearings

March 3 at 10 a.m.
House Armed Services Committee
"Military Force Authorization Issues"

March 3 at 2:30 p.m.
Senate Armed Services Committee
"Fiscal 2016 Defense Authorization"

March 3 at 3:30 p.m.
House Armed Services Committee
Subcommittee on Readiness
"Defense Infrastructure and Strategic Requirements"

March 4 at 10 a.m.
House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees
"Joint Hearing to receive the Legislative Presentation of the Veterans of Foreign Wars"

March 4 at 1 p.m.
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs
Roundtable discussion on veterans' disability benefits appeals
Participating for the Legion: Zachary Hearn, deputy director for benefits, Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Division

March 4 at 2:30 p.m.
Senate Armed Services Committee
Subcommittee on Personnel
"Fiscal 2016 Defense Authorization: Military Personnel Programs"

March 5 at 10 a.m.
House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees
"Joint Hearing to receive the Legislative Presentation of Multiple Veterans Service Organizations"

For the Record:
American Legion National Commander Michael D. Helm testified on Feb. 25 before a joint session of the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs committees. **Watch the video**

The Commander's testimony was based on The American

Legion's legislative priorities for 2015, which are largely shaped by its concern over transition support for servicemembers leaving active duty. **See the Legion's legislative priorities**

March 2, 2015, Issue No. 037; **Subscribe to The American Legion Legislative Update.**

THE AMERICAN LEGION
LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

The dangers of deep defense cuts

The new defense secretary has an enormous task. To fulfill his primary responsibility of fielding a military capable of keeping the United States safe, he must convince his boss – and Congress – to reverse six consecutive years of defense cuts and reject sequestration.
Read more

Recent Legion news

- **Government must treat small business fairly**
- **Legion makes recommendations on education benefits**
- **Legion participates in Obama roundtable**

Articles of interest:

- **Thornberry proposes defense acquisition reform bill**
- **Bill would help veterans get long-term care**
- **DoD's budget warnings fall flat in Congress**
- **Authorization stalls for military force against ISIS**
- **Politico op-ed: "What the House Gets Right on Defense Spending"**
- **Afghanistan president to meet with Obama**
- **Obama may alter A'stan drawdown timetable**

LEGISLATIVE QUESTION OF THE WEEK

Q: What is the status of The American Legion's analysis of the recommendations submitted by the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission?

A: SEE THE ANSWER AND SUBMIT YOUR QUESTION

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VISIT THE CITIZEN COSPONSOR PROJECT

Upcoming congressional hearings

Tuesday, March 24 at 10 a.m.
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Defense
"Fiscal Year 2016 Appropriations: Defense"

Tuesday, March 24 at 2 p.m.
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Legislative hearing on the GI Bill, homeless veterans and veteran-owned small businesses
Testifying for the Legion: Steve Gonzalez, assistant director, Veterans Employment & Education Division

Tuesday, March 24 at 2:30 p.m.
Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs
"The Veterans Choice Act: Exploring the Distance Criteria"
Testifying for the Legion: Roscoe Butler, deputy director, Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Division

Wednesday, March 25 at 2 p.m.
House Committee on Armed Services
Subcommittee on Military Personnel
"Stakeholders' Views of the Recommendations of the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission"
Testifying for the Legion: John Stovall, director, National Security Division

Thursday, March 26 at 8 a.m.
House Committee on Armed Services
"The Department of Defense's Readiness Posture"

For the Record:
Eight individuals have been named to sit on a congressional commission that will study the future of the U.S. Army's force structure. **Read more**

March 23, 2015, Issue No. 038; **Subscribe to The American Legion Legislative Update.**

THE AMERICAN LEGION
LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Helm responds to Philly VA report

National Commander Helm responds to Department of Veterans Inspector General report substantiating gross mismanagement, negligence and misconduct at Philly Regional Office. **Read more**

Recent Legion news

- **More judges needed for U.S. Court of Appeals**
- **Legion supports new veterans small business law**
- **VA must 'hold true to its mission'**
- **Senate clarifies 40-mile rule for Choice Card program**
- **Legion pushes for D0D-VA collaboration on pay, benefits**
- **Legion testimony focuses on VA law changes'**

Articles of interest:

- **Manager removed at Philly VA regional office**
- **Army approves more benefits for Fort Hood victims**
- **House panel unveils $77B bill to fund military bases, vets' benefits**
- **Republicans look to lift spending caps**
- **Whistleblowers say that VA still retaliates against them**
- **McCain delivers warning on defense spending**

FOR THE RECORD

The American Legion is holding its second National Credentialing Summit in Washington on April 28-29. About 200 key decision-makers from across America, including state legislators and staff members, will learn best practices for passing laws and changing credentialing regulations to help more veterans get jobs in the private sector: **Read more**

BE HEARD ON THE HILL

Congress now offers a website where American Legion members can weigh in on legislative action.

VISIT THE CITIZEN COSPONSOR PROJECT

Upcoming congressional hearings

Tuesday, April 21 at 2:30 p.m.
SVAC
"Fulfilling the Promise to Women Veterans"

Wednesday, April 22 at 10:30 a.m.
HVAC
"Philadelphia and Oakland: Systemic Failures and Mismanagement"

Wednesday, April 22 at 2 p.m.
HVAC Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity
"Roundtable: Examine recommendations made in Final Report of the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission"
Participating for the Legion: Steve Gonzalez, assistant director of the Veterans Employment & Education Division

Thursday, April 23 at 10 a.m.
HVAC Subcommittee on Health
Hearing on draft legislation, including the Toxic Exposure Research Act and a bill directing VA to submit an annual report on VHA.
Testifying for the Legion: Louis Celli, director of the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Division.

Wednesday, April 29 at 10 a.m.
HASC
Markup of FY 2016 National Defense Authorization Act

Thursday, April 30 at 10:30 a.m.
HVAC
"Examining Access and Quality of Care and Services for Women Veterans"

April 20, 2015, Issue No. 039; **Subscribe to The American Legion Legislative Update.**

THE AMERICAN LEGION
LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

LEGISLATIVE ALERT *Tell Congress to not to shortchange VA on funding!*

COVER Act would expand TBI/PTSD treatments

The measure would establish a commission to examine complementary and alternative medicines. **Read more**

Recent Legion news

- **VA changes 40-mile rule for Choice Card eligibility**
- **VA official updates Legionnaires on Denver project**
- **Legion expects 'fully funded' VA from Congress**

Articles of interest:

- **Lawmakers unhappy with VA Secretary McDonald**
- **Senate passes bill to review Iran nuclear deal**
- **VA's suicide hotline is under investigation**
- **Winners, losers in $612 billion defense bill**
- **Kaine presses for ISIL war resolution**
- **Senate leaders vow to block A-10 Warthog cuts**

LEGISLATIVE QUESTION OF THE WEEK

Q: What is the Legion's stand on the current version of the Military Construction-Veterans Affairs appropriations bill?

A: SEE THE ANSWER AND SUBMIT YOUR QUESTION

Upcoming congressional hearings

Tuesday, May 12 at 2:30 p.m.
Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs
"Exploring the Implementation and Future of the Veterans Choice Program"
Testifying for the Legion: Roscoe Butler, deputy director for health.

Wednesday, May 13 at 10 a.m.
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
"Assessing the Promise and Progress of the Choice Program"
Testifying for the Legion: Roscoe Butler, deputy director for health.

Wednesday, May 13 at 3 p.m.
Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs
"Pending Benefits Legislation"
The Legion is submitting testimony for the record.

Thursday, May 14 at 10:30 a.m.
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Subcommittee on Oversight & Investigations
"Waste, Fraud and Abuse in VA's Purchase Card Program"

Friday, May 15 at 9:45 a.m.
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Subcommittee on Health
"Overcoming Barriers to More Efficient and Effective VA Staffing"
The Legion is submitting testimony for the record.

For the Record:
Senate Armed Services Chairman John McCain has released a report on government waste, titled "America's Most Wasted," which identifies $294 billion in expired federal programs and $1.1 billion in what the Arizona Republican says is wasteful government spending. McCain's report comes after the annual "Wastebook" from retired Sen. Tom Coburn, R-Okla., was released for the last time in 2014. The report is just the first in a series that McCain is planning, and his staff says future targets will likely align with his role as Senate Armed Services chairman, too. **Click here for the full report**