The American Legion

For God and country

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

American Legion Welcomes Recognition of Additional Vets as House Passes LEGION Act

(INDIANAPOLIS, July 23, 2019) -- The head of the nation's largest veterans organization, welcomed today's passage by the House of Representatives of a bipartisan act which will recognize veterans who served during periods not previously considered "wartime."

The Let Everyone Get Involved In Opportunities for National Service Act (LEGION Act) opens the door for hundreds of thousands of veterans to access American Legion programs and benefits for which they previously had not been eligible. As a congressionally-chartered organization, the legislation was required for The American Legion to change its eligibility criteria.

"Today's passage of the LEGION Act is a victory for veterans who until now have not had their service to our nation fully recognized," American Legion National Commander Brett Reistad said. "These veterans and their family members can now enjoy all the benefits of their service which they so richly deserve."

The gaps in the war eras were largely during the Cold War, a time when threats to U.S. national security was real, especially to the men and women serving in uniform. Overall, estimates show that about 1,600 U.S. servicemembers were killed or wounded in hostile operations during periods that were not previously recognized as times of war by the federal government.

On Feb. 14, Sen. Kyrsten Sinema, D-Ariz., introduced the LEGION Act, along with Sen. Thom Tillis, R-N.C. It passed the Senate by unanimous consent on June 11. Reps. Lou Correa, D-Calif., and Ben Cline, R-Va., introduced the House version.

President Trump is expected to sign the LEGION Act law soon.

Reistad evoked the memories of The American Legion's founders who launched the organization 100 years ago this year.

"As we celebrate our centennial anniversary, we hold to the same truths that our founders appropriately crafted a century ago," Reistad said. "Among those: a veteran is a veteran. It does not matter whether a veteran fought enemies on foreign soil, protected our interests in an ocean far away or secured our national defense here at home. Their service is what matters most. Now, thanks to this legislation, all veterans will be properly remembered for their service."

With a current membership of nearly two million wartime veterans, The American Legion was founded in 1919 on the four pillars of a strong national security, veterans affairs, patriotic youth programs and Americanism. Legionnaires work for the betterment of their communities through nearly 13,000 posts worldwide. From the drafting of the original GI Bill to the creation of the Department of Veterans Affairs, The American Legion is the most influential voice for America's veterans. The American Legion, www.legion.org, will be celebrating its centennial through Veterans Day.

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