STILL SERVING: IT'S WHO WE ARE

The American Legion is the voice of 2.3 million American veterans and servicemembers. As a resolution-based organization, The American Legion's positions represent the views of its members and are based on the four pillars: Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, National Security, Americanism, and Children & Youth.

Included in this brochure are the top issues The American Legion will be fighting for in 2015.

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THE AMERICAN LEGION

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES for the 114th Congress

1st Session

Updated Mar. 19, 2015

The American Legion **LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES** for the 114th Congress

Fully fund a superior national defense as the global war on terror rages on

The global war on terrorism is continuing to pose a threat to America's security and national interests. It is critical to maintain a well-funded Department of Defense to ensure a strong national defense to protect America and its allies from enemies such as the Islamic State. Additionally, The American Legion strongly advocates for a good quality of life for troops and a sensible transition from military service to civilian life. The Legion vows to hold our elected leaders responsible and fight against those who seek to jeopardize the benefits promised to past, present and future servicemembers. The severity of sequester cuts has been lessened, however force reductions continue and the military remains in a recovery mode after absorbing recent dramatic cuts.

Contact: Dean Stoline

Continue efforts to reform VA

When news broke about veterans dying while waiting for VA appointments and secret wait lists, The American Legion led the way in championing reform. Last year's passage of the Veterans Access Choice and Accountability Act was a promising first step. But there is need for continued improvement and reform such as strengthening the oversight program. Veterans must have faith that the health-care system designed for them will be there to meet their needs.

Contact: Warren Goldstein

Support more efficient VA claims systems

The American Legion calls on Congress to support VBA's ongoing transformation of the benefits claims processing system, while providing aggressive oversight to ensure it is completed properly, with sufficient funding to finish developing and deploying its new Veterans Benefits Management System, as well as support for the complete digital conversion of all active paper claims files.

Contact: Warren Goldstein

Provide help for veterans struggling with mental health issues and brain injuries

The American Legion has dedicated extensive resources to studying the devastating effects of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). Additional resources and alternative treatments must be provided as options for veterans and servicemembers in need of treatment for brain injuries and mental stress.

Contact: Warren Goldstein

Ensure transition programs are not adversely affected by sequestration

Sequestration cuts are having an impact on servicemen and women who are transitioning to the civilian world. The primary issue is that Transition Assistance Programs (TAP) face budget shortfalls as Department of Defense funds are being squeezed to accommodate security goals. At the same time, reductions in force strength are forcing more servicemembers out. Congress must act to reverse these cuts and ensure that transitioning servicemembers are able to make contributions in the civilian workforce.

Contact: Larry Provost

Create opportunities for veterans in the private sector

The Legion calls on Congress to implement a proposed pilot program that would subsidize businesses and non-profit organizations that create on-the-job training opportunities for veterans. Additionally, extend and improve the Work Opportunity Tax Credit for hiring veterans under the VOW Act.

Contact: Larry Provost

Provide top education through Post-9/11 GI Bill

As the founding author of the original GI Bill, The American Legion is continuing to press for legislation to help transitioning servicemembers receive quality education benefits. The Legion believes that veterans should be allowed to convert GI Bill education funds into capital for business start-ups. These grants would further the goal of growing the veteran-owned small business industry, which, in turn, would generate jobs for veterans.

Contact: Larry Provost

End veteran homelessness

The American Legion believes that not a single man or woman who has defended our nation should be forced to sleep on the streets at night. The Legion supports the goal of eliminating veterans' homelessness by 2015 and calls on Congress to pledge necessary resources to accomplish this goal, including medical, rehabilitative and employment assistance to homeless veterans and their families. The programs in place are working. It is essential that their funding continues in order to eradicate this problem.

Contact: Larry Provost

Oppose further increases in TRICARE fees, including prescription drug fees

The American Legion opposes any measures that would further dilute benefits including TRICARE coverage and military retiree benefits. Increased out-of-pocket costs to individual military retirees, including higher prescription co-payments, devalue incentives for military careers.

Contact: Dean Stoline

Repeal unfair offsets that penalize disabled veterans and widows

VA disability compensation should not be offset from military retired pay regardless of the VA rating percentage, nor should VA survivor benefits (DIC) be offset from military Survivor Benefit Plan annuities. The American Legion supports legislation that would repeal those unjust offsets now.

Contact: Dean Stoline

Protect the American Flag

The American Legion remains committed to protecting Old Glory, and continues to support legislation that safeguards our nation's flag from physical desecration. **H.J. Res. 9**

Contact: Jeff Steele