AMERICAN LEGION

LEGISLATIVE WEEKLY

October 3, 2025

WEEKLY GRASSROOTS NEWSLETTER

This week, we are asking Legionnaires to contact Congress to urge them to negotiate in good faith and fund the government to protect veterans' services. As of 3:00 on October 3, Congress failed to come to an agreement to pass full government funding, and as a result, the government is still shut down. Veterans and their families rely on stability in government to know their essential benefits, like claims processing and community care, remain uninterrupted. As of today, the U.S. Coast Guard and military personnel are forced to go without pay while performing essential missions.

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	**349**
Florida	**269**
Texas	**215**
New York	**215**
Wisconsin	**214**

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!

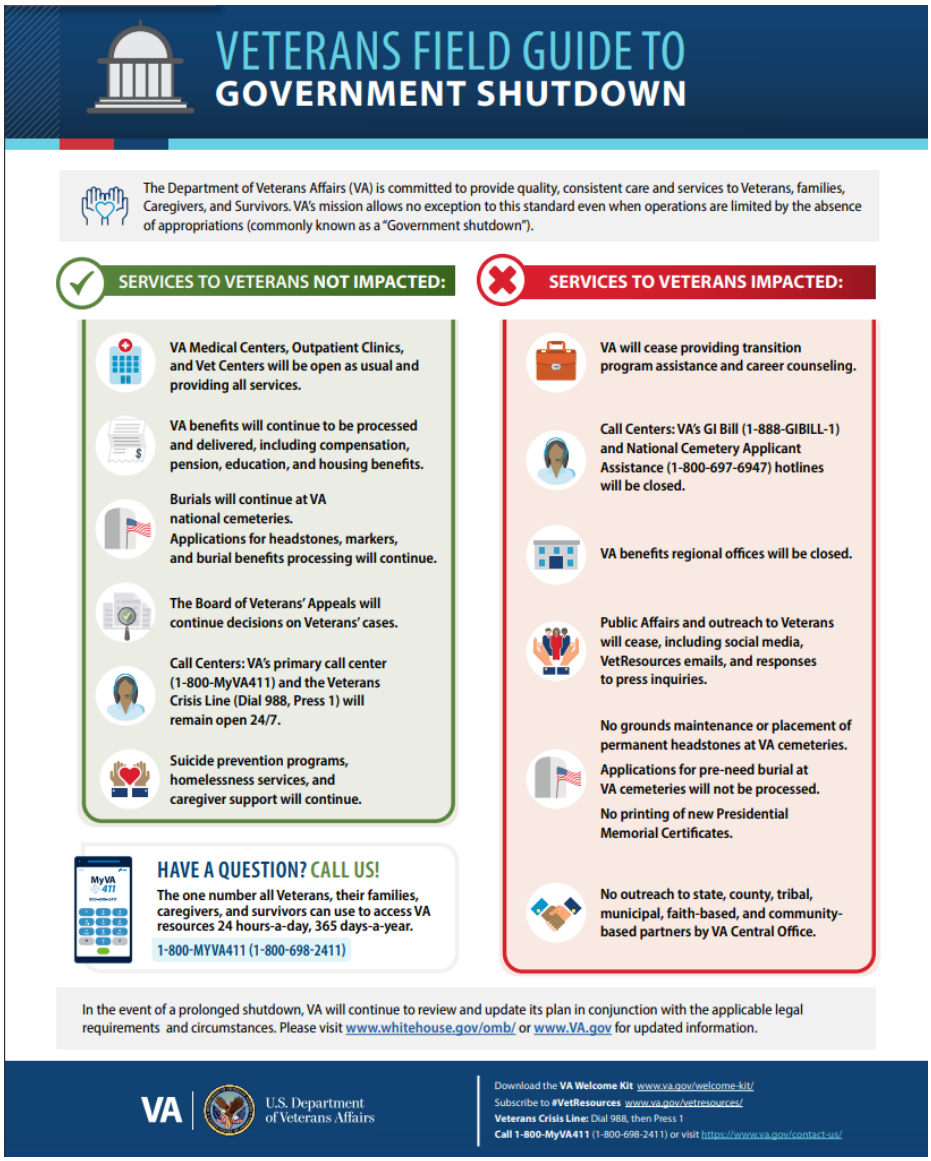
https://www.votervoice.net/AmericanLegion/Register

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. On the afternoon of October 3, the Senate held a vote on the continuing resolution to fund the government, which failed to pass.

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.



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

HOW WILL THE GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN IMPACT THE U.S. MILITARY?

This article's original publication can be found here

Congress failed to reach a funding deal by Wednesday morning's deadline, leading to a government shutdown that will force active-duty service members to continue to serve without pay until a deal is made.

During a government shutdown, all active-duty personnel, as well as National Guard who are currently deployed, must carry out their assigned duties with their pay delayed until the shutdown is over. Civilian personnel whose work the Defense Department considers essential, or "excepted," will also continue to work, while other civilians are furloughed for the duration of the shutdown.

"After the government shutdown, all government employees will automatically receive back pay, based on the terms of the Government Employee Fair Treatment Act of 2019," said Seamus Daniels, a fellow for Defense Budget Analysis at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Active-duty service members won't get paid on time unless Congress passes a separate piece of legislation, as it did in 2013 with the "Pay Our Military Act," which ensured military pay and allowances continued during a government shutdown.

Republican Rep. Jen Kiggans of Virginia introduced a bill earlier this month with bipartisan support, the "Pay Our Troops Act of 2026," which would keep members of the military and Coast Guard paid during a shutdown, but it did not pass in time because the House is out of session until Oct 7.

During the last shutdown in 2019, the Navy Federal Credit Union and USAA offered special loans to members of the military, and they plan to do so again if there's a shutdown in October. The Navy Federal Credit Union said in a press release it would "offer 0% APR loans to eligible members whose pay may be affected, continuing a tradition of assistance seen during previous shutdowns in 2011, 2013 and 2018-2019, when nearly 20,000 members received support." USAA plans to offer eligible members who have accounts with the bank a "no-interest loan equal to the amount of one net paycheck."

The Defense Department published contingency guidance on Friday, outlining its priority missions and stating that unused funds passed in the reconciliation bill over the summer could be considered to support them. The list includes, in order: operations to secure the U.S. Southern Border, Middle East operations, the U.S. missile defense project Golden Dome for America, depot maintenance, shipbuilding and critical munitions.

The guidance estimates about 406,000 of the department's 741,000 civilian employees will be required to work in the event of a shutdown because their mission is critical and not easily carried out by any U.S. service member.

While a memo from the White House Office of Management and Budget said some civilians could be laid off during the shutdown, the guidance released by the Defense Department outlines furloughs but no cuts to the civilian workforce.

During the shutdown, medical care and dental care will be excepted, according to the contingency guidance, but elective surgeries and other elective procedures would be delayed unless they're necessary for military readiness. Private health care using the Defense Department's TRICARE medical insurance would continue uninterrupted.

WHAT'S AFFECTED BY THE GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

This article's original publication can be found here

Here's what the current shutdown means for veterans, servicemembers, their families and national security.

With Congress locked in a budget battle and unable to reach a compromise, the U.S. government went into a partial shutdown at 12:01 a.m. on Oct. 1. While some critical government functions will continue to operate, others will be paused.

Those U.S. citizens who collect Social Security – including retirees, disabled Americans and the dependents of deceased workers – won't see an interruption in their monthly payments during the shutdown. Food assistance programs will continue until they run out of funds.

While U.S. military operations will continue during a shutdown, U.S. servicemembers will miss at least one paycheck if a budget deal isn't in place by Oct. 15. A shutdown also will force the furlough of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) civilians, including those in public affairs and community outreach personnel, financial management personnel and acquisition personnel.

For the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the department estimates that 97 percent of its employee will continue to work during a shutdown. VA benefits will continue to be processed and delivered, including compensation, pension, education and housing benefits. However, VA benefits regional offices are closed.

VA medical centers, outpatient clinics and Vet Centers remain open.

Here is an overview of how VA services, other DoD operations and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security are affected.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Programs not impacted

- 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. The VA Benefit Hotline (1-800-827-1000) will be available Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. ET.
- Suicide prevention programs, homelessness services, and caregiver support will continue.

Impacted programs

- 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.

U.S. Department of Defense

- **Operations**. Subordinate leaders in the DoD have the authority to evaluate and determine whether activities are "excepted" for supporting high priority efforts and for the safety of human life and protection of property. As of September 2025, the department considers the following among its highest priorities: Operations to secure the U.S. Southern Border, Middle East Operations, Golden Dome for America, Depot Maintenance, Shipbuilding and Critical Munitions.
- **Servicemember Impact.** Though not getting paid, active-duty servicemembers, including reserve component personnel on federal active duty, will continue to report for duty and carry out assigned duties. National Guard servicemembers performing duties under Title 32 will be terminated unless such duties are in support of excepted activities defined by the department. Reserve servicemembers performing Active Guard Reserve (AGR) duty will continue to carry out AGR authorized duties for the period of their AGR tour. Reserve servicemembers will not perform inactive duty resulting in the obligation of funds, except in support of military operations necessary for national security, disaster response or fulfilling pre-deployment requirements. And Temporary Duty Travel

(TDY) scheduled to begin after the shutdown may be cancelled if not in support of an excepted activity, such as returning to one's official duty station. Those on PCS orders attending training and educational activities may continue to attend classes only if the instructor is military or is a contractor paid with prior year funds. PCS orders for duty station changes may be impacted if not funded with prior year funds.

- **Quality of Life Impact**: On the medical side, inpatient care, acute and emergency outpatient care in DoD medical facilities will continue during a shutdown. Elective surgeries and other procedures may be postponed or canceled. Private health care through TRICARE will not be affected. Services and counseling for victims of sexual assault, religious, suicide, substance abuse, counterdrug activities and operations of mortuary affairs will still be provided during a shutdown. On the education side, schools that are operated by the Department of Defense Education Activity will remain open, but sports and extracurricular activities will result in a pause during a shutdown. Mess hall operations, physical training and "childcare activities required for readiness" would continue in a shutdown. Meanwhile, the operation of childcare centers is still to be determined. During past shutdowns, childcare centers depended on the level of base staffing and demand. Thus, a shutdown would affect childcare on a case-by-case basis.

Department of Homeland Security (DHS)

- **Impact** to operations. DHS secures U.S. borders and critical infrastructures, while protecting the U.S. from hybrid threats. A shutdown would disrupt DHS's ability to work effectively, leaving Americans less safe. Without proper pay, both members of the U.S. Coast Guard and border agents may have less productivity due to financial uncertainty, further decreasing DHS's ability.
- **U.S. Coast Guard:** The 40,000 active-duty members of the U.S. Coast Guard will continue to work and will only be compensated for their unpaid work if an appropriation is passed. Members of the Coast Guard are unable to file for interim support that would supplement their income. During the longest government shutdown (2019), members needed severe assistance for the costs of shelter, food, utilities, clothing and health expenses.
- **Border Patrol:** U.S. border crossings will stay open, and border agents will continue to work without pay. Along the U.S. northern and southern borders, roughly 19,000 Border Patrol agents will be required to report to work. Most agents patrol the U.S.-Mexico border region, staffing field stations, interior checkpoints and temporary holding facilities. Approximately 25,000 U.S. customs officers would be required to work at some 300 land and airports of entry without pay.

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.

Stephen Blowers, New York

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

Recently, Stephen met with Congressman Joe Morelle as well as his Deputy Director of Community Affairs. While in his meeting, they discussed many legislative efforts to support servicemembers, including HR 1663 (VSAFE Act of 2025) and HR 2878 (Daniel J Harvey Jr and Adam Lambert Improving Servicemember Transition to Reduce Veteran Suicide Act). They also discussed passing legislation to expand financial assistance to servicemembers for childcare facilities, retaining quality of life programs, and repairing or constructing dining facilities at DoD facilities.

Thank you, Stephen, 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.

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UPCOMING CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS

As of 10/3, the following hearings are scheduled:

- Tuesday, October 7, 9:30 AM: Senate Committee on Armed Services, Full Committee Nomination Hearing -- "*To consider the nominations of: Mr. John Noh to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Indo-Pacific Security Affairs; Mr. Charles L. Young III to be General Counsel of the Department of the Army; Mr. William K. Lane III to be General Counsel of the Department of the Air Force; and Mr. David E. Beck to be Deputy Administrator for Defense Programs, National Nuclear Security Administration*"
- Tuesday, October 7, 2:30 PM: Senate Committee on Armed Services, Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities -- "*To receive testimony on threats and challenges posed to Department of Defense personnel and*

operations from adversarial access to publicly available data coupled with advanced data analysis tools now widely available on the commercial market"

- Thursday, October 9, 9:30 AM: Senate Committee on Armed Services, Full Committee Nomination Hearing -- "*To consider the nomination of: General Kenneth S. Wilsbach, USAF for reappointment to the grade of general and to be Chief of Staff of the Air Force*"

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

From: Grassroots Manager
To: Trace, Howard C.
Subject: [EXTERNAL] - Weekly Newsletter (10/10/2025)
Date: Friday, October 10, 2025 5:01:37 PM

AMERICAN LEGION

LEGISLATIVE WEEKLY

October 10, 2025

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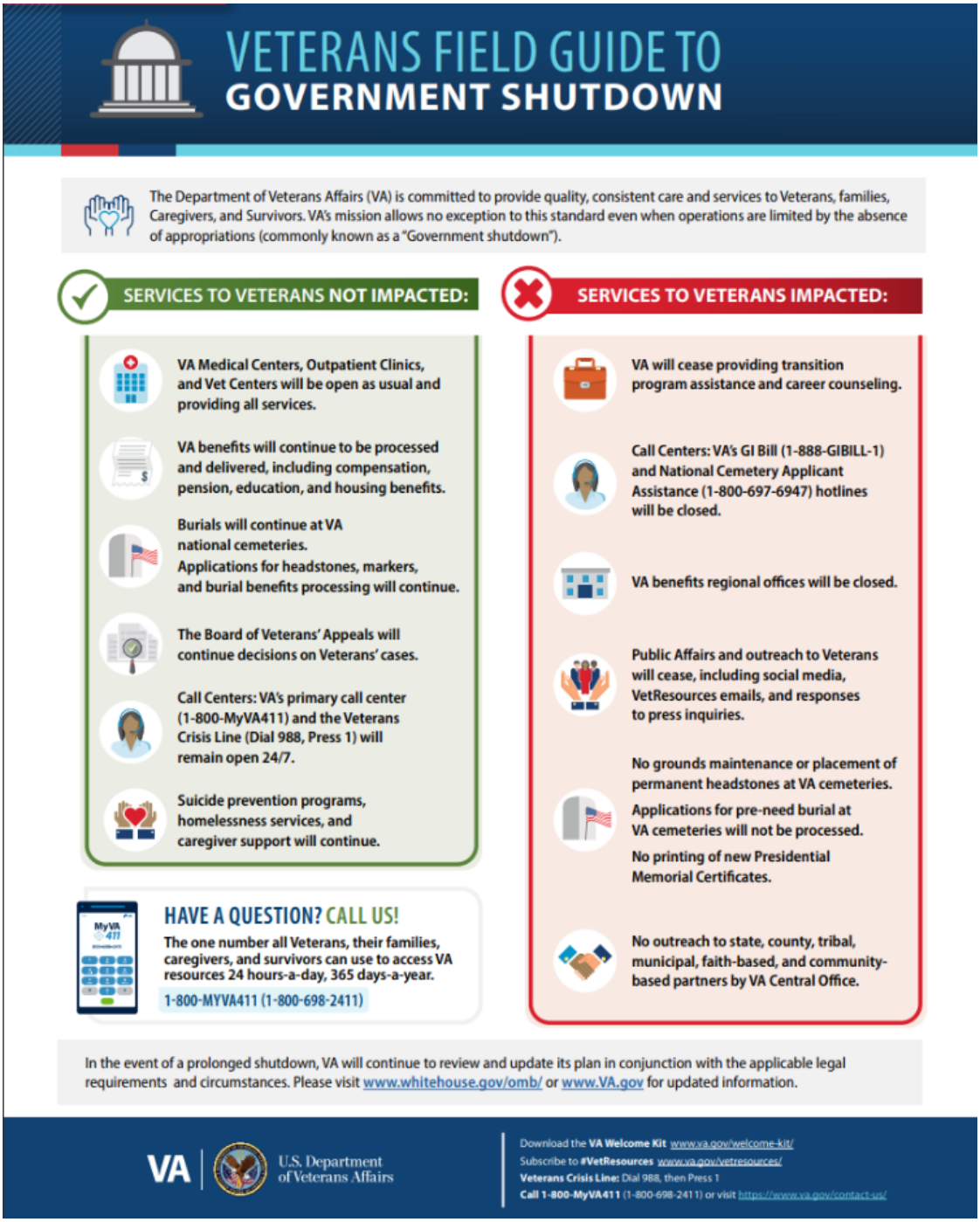
On the afternoon of October 8, the Senate voted on the motion to proceed S. 2882, which failed to pass with a vote of 47-52. On the morning of October 9, the Senate voted again on the same issue, which failed to pass with a vote of of 47-50.

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.



NATIONAL COMMANDER WILEY TO CONGRESS: DO YOUR JOB

This article's original publication can be found here.

National commander calls on Congress to end government shutdown, pass the Pay Our Military Act during remarks to National Executive Committee.

Amid the second week of a partial government shutdown – one that will see members of the U.S. military go unpaid until a budget compromise is reached – American Legion National Commander Dan K. Wiley had strong words for those responsible for the government impasse.

During the opening of The American Legion National Executive Committee's Fall Meetings in Indianapolis, Wiley called on the U.S. Congress to live up to its sworn oath just as members of the military do every day.

"I can't help but if Congress would do its job half as well as our military – no … one-tenth as well as our military – our country would be far better off," Wiley said. "Passing a budget is a constitutionally mandated responsibility of Congress. Our troops take an oath to uphold and defend the Constitution, and they do their job. Congress also takes an oath to the Constitution. It's time they do their job.

"Too many times over the past decade – regardless of which party's in power – the government has operated under continuing resolutions. Our military absolutely hates continuing resolutions. They are bad for planning, they are bad for strategizing, and they are bad for readiness."

But a government shutdown is worse, Wiley said – especially one in which every branch of the U.S. military is going without pay and thousands of veterans in the federal workforce may lose their jobs.

“The effects of all this will be quite visible in your departments, particularly those with large military communities and federal workforces,” Wiley said. “If there ever is a time to ramp up our efforts to Be the One and do Buddy Checks to check on our brothers and sisters, now is the time.”

Wiley also noted the shutdown’s effect on the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. “While the VA is still seeing patients and its hospitals are open, its regional benefits offices are closed,” he said. “Outreach to veterans has ceased. So have ground maintenance at VA cemeteries, transition program assistance and the GI Bill Benefits hotline.”

Wiley said the top priority is to reopen the government. But Congress also must pass the Pay Our Military Act, which would pay every branch of the military for the duration of the shutdown or until Jan. 1, whichever is earliest.

Wiley asked Legionnaires to use the organization’s Grassroots Action Center to urge congressional support for both bills: H.R. 1932 and Senate Bill 876.

“The next military pay day is Oct. 15,” Wiley said. “We all know that military life is stressful enough. The troops should not have to worry about whether they can buy groceries, or make their next rent and car payment, or how they’re going to make ends meet because the government’s not doing its job. Our troops are doing the job. They deserve better.”

Wiley also called for passage of the Major Richard Star Act after the shutdown ends. “Some people call it concurrent receipt, but it’s more accurately described as the ‘Disabled Veterans Tax’, because that’s exactly what it is,” he said. “Tens of thousands of medically retired veterans have their VA disability compensation deducted from their military pensions. This offset is highly unfair. Why punish those who spent careers serving the military and were forced to retire early because they were hurt serving their country?

“It’s time to tell Congress, ‘Do your job and pass the Richard Star Act and end this disabled veterans tax.’”

Wiley then shifted to ongoing programs and initiatives within The American Legion:

· The national commander urged Legionnaires and Sons of The American Legion to register for next year’s National Regional Information Conferences in Indianapolis on Jan. 31 and in Atlanta on Feb. 7. “Legionnaires and Sons members can network with each other at these conferences,” Wiley said.

“They can receive training on Be the One, on our programs, on post operations, legal issues, running effective meetings, retention and all of the American Legion programs. Please plan on attending one.”

· Wiley said he believes the organization can finish with more members in 2026 than it did this year. “The goals we have include recruiting at least 75,000 new members and achieving 90-percent retention,” he said. “Communication, community and camaraderie. I believe that’s the message we need to get our message out not only to our members, but to the public.”

· Along those lines, he also asked for a 100-percent Consolidated Post Report submission rate, “so we can tell The American Legion story not just to our members, but potential members, and also to Congress and the media. It’s hard to grow an organization if the public doesn’t know about our programs. The more we tell people what we do, the more they will want to join what we do.”

· Wiley announced that the top three American Legion recruiters from Oct. 1 through Nov. 11 will each receive two tickets to this year’s Army-Navy Game presented by USAA, as will the top departments in each of the Legion’s five regions. Get the details here.

· The national commander also asked Legion Family members to sign up for the USA 250 Challenge. “It is our way to honor the 250th anniversary, the semiquincentennial, of our great country, while at the same time experiencing your own personal growth,” Wiley said. “You can run 250 miles, you can visit 250 veterans at the VA hospital, you can do 250 Buddy Checks or come up with your own challenge. The possibilities of what you want to do are endless and only limited by your own imagination. And the proceeds go to a great cause, our Veterans & Children’s Foundation.”

KIGGANS LEADS BIPARTISAN PUSH TO GUARANTEE MILITARY PAY DURING GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWNS

This article’s original publication can be found here

On September 16, Congresswoman Jen Kiggans (VA-02), a Navy veteran and member of the House Armed Services Committee, introduced the *Pay Our Troops Act of 2026.* This bipartisan legislation ensures that members of the U.S. Armed Forces, including the Coast Guard, continue receiving pay and benefits in the event of a government shutdown.

“Our servicemembers should never have to worry about missing a paycheck because Washington can’t do its job,” **said Congresswoman Kiggans**. “As a former Navy helicopter pilot, wife of a veteran, and Mom of a servicemember, I know firsthand the sacrifices military families make every single day. The last thing they should face is financial uncertainty caused by partisan gridlock. This bill is about one thing: keeping faith with those who keep us free.”

The authority would remain in effect until regular appropriations are enacted or until January 1, 2027.

In the 118th Congress, the *Pay Our Troops Act* earned the support of more than 100 bipartisan cosponsors, including members of the House Armed Services and Appropriations Committees. With the possibility of future shutdowns, the legislation reaffirms a simple principle: those who serve our nation in uniform should never be caught in the middle of Washington’s political stalemates.

“Military service is more than a career; it’s a commitment to defend this nation at all costs,” **Kiggans added.** “This legislation ensures that we honor the commitment of our troops by guaranteeing their pay, no matter what happens in Washington.”

“Our servicemembers should never have to question whether they will receive a paycheck for standing guard over our nation. The *Pay Our Troops Act of 2026* is a common-sense, bipartisan measure that ensures those in uniform, as well as the civilians and contractors who support them, are protected from the political uncertainty of government shutdowns. At IAVA, we strongly support this legislation because it reaffirms a simple truth: when our troops uphold their promise to serve, our nation must uphold its promise to pay them,” **said Dr. Kyleanne Hunter, CEO, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA).**

“Our military is willing to do their job for the country, which often puts their lives at risk. We just ask that Congress do their job to keep the government running and get us paid,” **said Kathy Roth-Douquet, CEO, Blue Star Families.**

“The *Pay Our Troops Act* ensures our servicemembers are paid on time, even if government funding stalls,” **said Lt. Gen. Brian T. Kelly, USAF (Ret), President and CEO of MOAA.** “As they continue to stand watch and defend our nation, they should never have to wonder whether their paychecks will arrive. This legislation provides the financial certainty military families deserve, protecting them from the instability of government shutdowns while they

protect us."

"Financial stability shouldn't be on the line while military families must continue to serve. Military families deserve the paychecks, benefits, and the safety nets they rely on to make ends meet and service possible. We urge Congress to pass the *Pay Our Troops Act* immediately and show our service members and their families their sacrifice is worth it," **said Besa Pinchotti, CEO.**

Original co-sponsors: Brian Fitzpatrick (PA-01), Nancy Mace (SC-01), Thomas Kean (NJ-07), Dan Crenshaw (TX-02), Zach Nunn (IA-03), Anna Paulina Luna (FL-13), Marie Gluesenkamp Perez (WA-03), James Moylan (GU), Juan Ciscomani (AZ-06), Rob Wittman (VA-01), Lauren Boebert (CO-04), Cory Mills (FL-07), Bill Huizenga (MI-04), Mike Ezell (MS-04), Mark Messmer (IN-08), Barry Loudermilk (GA-11), Don Bacon (NE-02), Chris Pappas (NH-01), Derrick Van Orden (WI-03), Derek Tran (CA-45), Seth Moulton (MA-06), Greg Murphy (NC-03), Sam Graves (MO-06), Rich McCormick (GA-07), Carlos Gimenez (FL-28), Jeff Crank (CO-05), Wesley Bell (MO-01), Don Davis (NC-01), Dale Strong (AL-05), Rob Bresnahan (PA-08), Mike Turner (OH-10), Claudia Tenney (NY-24), Derek Schmidt (KS-02), Pete Stauber (MN-08), Wesley Hunt (TX-38), Aaron Bean (FL-04), Dan Newhouse (WA-04), Jared Golden (ME-02), John McGuire (VA-05), Daniel Webster (FL-11), Randy Feenstra (IA-04), Scott Franklin (FL-18), Jeff Hurd (CO-03), Abraham Hamadeh (AZ-08), Mike Kelly (PA-16), Morgan Luttrell (TX-08), Diana Harshbarger (TN-01), Brad Finstad (MN-01), Kevin Self (TX-03)

Endorsing Organizations: National Military Family Association, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, United Steelworkers, Blue Star Families, the Military Officers Association of America, the Defense Credit Union Council, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the National Guard Association of the United States, the Navy League of the United States, the Association of the United States Army, and the Wounded Warrior Project

Background:

The *Pay Our Troops Act of 2026* guarantees pay and allowances for:

- Active-duty servicemembers, including members of the Coast Guard and Reserve Components;
- Civilian personnel at the Department of Defense and Department of Homeland Security (for the Coast Guard) who directly support servicemembers; and
- Contractors providing mission-essential support to servicemembers.

Read the bill here.

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Bill Aramony, Virginia

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

Recently, Bill participated in a veteran roundtable discussion held by Senator Mark Warner in Spotsylvania, VA. There, he discussed the Major Richard Star Act, the SGT Fox Act, and TAP legislation with other veterans as well as Congressional staff members.

Thank you, Bill, for your report and the time you have dedicated to the Legion's legislative priorities.

If you have made a Grassroots effort and would like to be considered for next week's "Legionnaire of the Week," please fill out the Congressional Contact Report Form here. You can also email us at grassroots@legion.org with the details.

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AMERICAN LEGION

LEGISLATIVE WEEKLY

October 17, 2025

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Take Our Government Shutdown Impact Survey!

As Congress continues to debate federal funding, we know the government shutdown is creating real challenges for veterans, servicemembers, families, and communities across the country. The results will help us advocate more effectively for those feeling the effects of the shutdown. You can find the link to our anonymous survey here.

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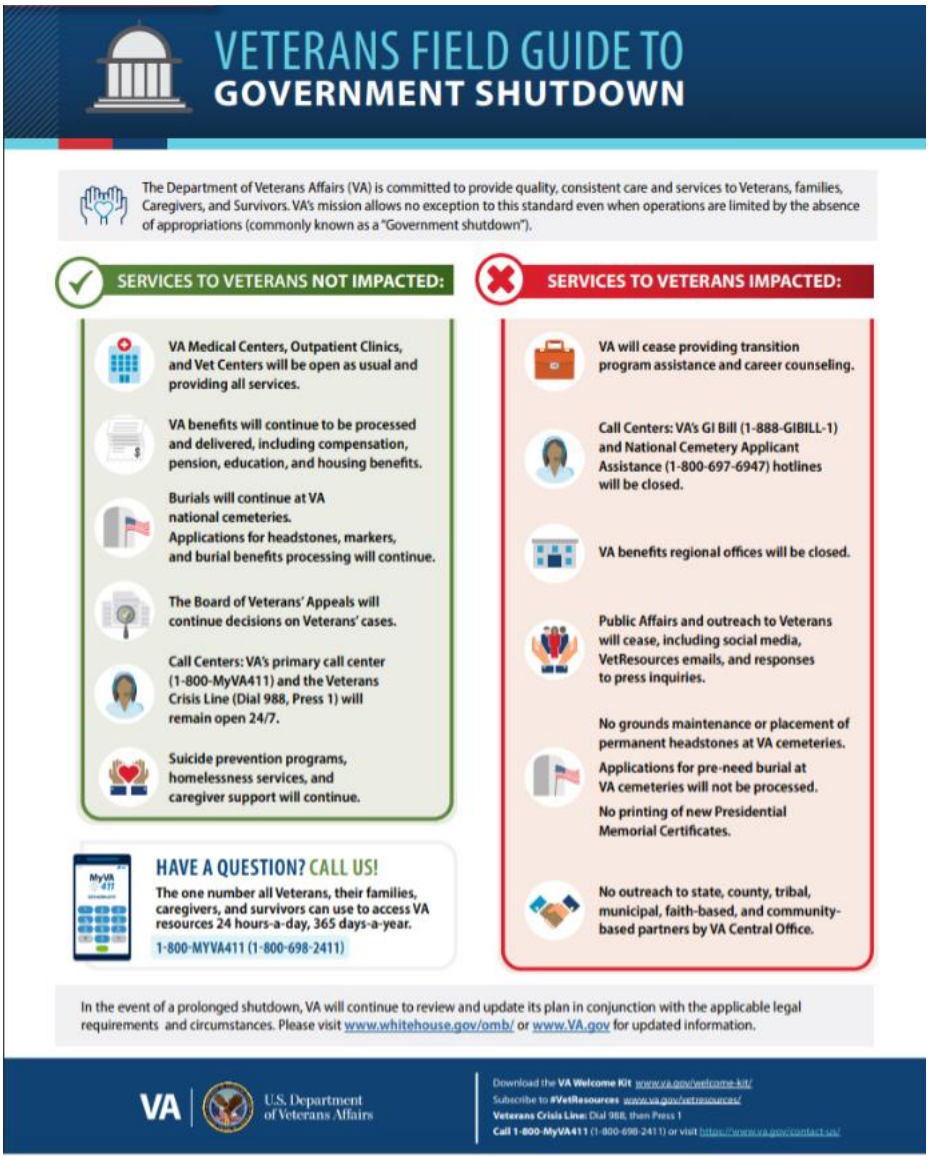
On October 14th, The American Legion participated in a joint press conference with other MSO/VSOs to call on Congress to open government and pass the Pay Our Troops Act. You can watch Executive Director Mario Marquez's remarks here.

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.



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

THE AMERICAN LEGION AND VETERANS' GROUPS URGE CONGRESS TO PASS THE PAY OUR TROOPS ACT

This article's original publication can be found here

Leaders from The American Legion and several Veterans organizations gathered in Washington, D.C., on Oct. 14 to demand that Congress pass the Pay Our Troops Act and end the ongoing government shutdown. Hosted by Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), the press conference brought together a coalition of advocates representing millions of Service Members, Veterans, and Military Families across the country.

Dr. Kyleanne Hunter, a Marine Corps Veteran and CEO of IAVA, said the shutdown is creating financial hardship and anxiety for troops and their families. She explained that while some VA benefits continue, many Veterans are experiencing delayed payments and difficulty reaching GI Bill hotlines or rescheduling appointments. Hunter urged lawmakers to deliver a permanent solution so that military pay isn't jeopardized during political disputes.

"Even before the shutdown began, nearly one in four active duty Service Members face food insecurity," Hunter said. "Nearly half of our active duty Service Members are living paycheck to paycheck, and putting them in a situation where they are facing uncertainty is not good for our national security."

The American Legion's Executive Director of Government Affairs, Mario Marquez, who previously served as a senior enlisted Marine leader, said he has seen firsthand how shutdowns hurt morale and readiness.

"It was the people who paid the price for political failure," Marquez said. "Congress must protect those who protect us. When lawmakers fail to keep their promises, they fail the very people who make this nation work."

Marquez described how shutdowns disrupt essential military programs and delay support services for Veterans. He pointed out that furloughs and pay delays can have lasting impacts on morale, readiness, and even mental health. The American Legion, representing 2.5 million members of the Legion family, stands with other organizations calling on lawmakers to "reopen the government and pass legislation to pay our troops so we never have to do this again."

The coalition emphasized that temporary measures allowing pay to continue are not enough. Tom Porter of Blue Star Families said that while 27 organizations recently urged Congress to act, Military Families continue to face uncertainty.

"Missing a payday means missing rent, missing meals, missing doctor visits," he said. "This isn't a bureaucratic inconvenience. It's a direct assault on the financial stability of those who sacrifice so much for this country."

The shutdown has also affected education benefits. Student Veterans of America (SVA) warned that the closure of the GI Bill hotline and furlough of counselors are leaving student Veterans without guidance or support. Many rely on these services to resolve

payment issues, verify enrollment, and maintain housing while in school. Delays in these benefits could force some to drop classes or face housing insecurity.

Other speakers included representatives from the Disabled American Veterans (DAV), Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS), the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA), and the National Military Family Association (NMFA). Each shared the same message: Service Members and their families should not be caught in the crossfire of partisan gridlock.

Candace Wheeler of TAPS explained that even though troops report for duty, many may do so without pay. “Although the administration has provided a temporary solution, it’s not sustainable,” she said. “Our military and surviving families must not be caught in the crosshairs of this budget process.”

NMFA’s Besa Pinchotti said it’s time for America to take military pay off the political table entirely. “We’ve allowed military pay to be weaponized as a bargaining chip,” she said. “Every time our nation disagrees, our troops end up holding the bill.”

With bipartisan support reportedly growing for the Pay Our Troops Act, advocates are calling on lawmakers to move quickly. The bill would guarantee that all active-duty, reserve, and National Guard personnel continue to receive pay during any lapse in government funding.

“Caring for America’s Veterans and Service Members should not be a partisan issue,” said DAV’s Scott Hogan. “Keeping our promise to Veterans and their families should unite every lawmaker in Washington.”

GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN IMPACTING VETERANS AFFAIRS. DETAILS ON BENEFITS, MEDICAL CARE, MORE

This article’s original publication can be found here

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' services are limited as thousands of its employees have been furloughed during the ongoing government shutdown.

The agency, which oversees health care and other benefits for veterans, is not operating as usual due to a lapse in federal funding appropriations.

The shutdown entered its 14th day on Oct. 14 as lawmakers remained at an impasse over spending proposals.

Some VA services, including compensation and pension benefits, are not impacted. Other areas, like transition program assistance, have ceased during the shutdown.

VA Secretary Doug Collins told Georgia radio station AccessWDUN on Oct. 10 that most of the affected services have to do with the agency's outreach efforts.

"Good news is we operate off of an advanced appropriation," Collins said. "Which means our hospitals, our clinics, disability benefits, those kinds of things are already pre-funded."

Is the VA still open during shutdown? See impacted services

Roughly 15,000 of the VA's more than 460,000 employees have been furloughed during the shutdown, according to the agency's contingency plan.

As a result, the following services are **not** available during the government shutdown:

- Transition program assistance and career counseling
- Call centers:
    - VA's GI Bill hotline (1-888-GIBILL-1) and Memorial Products Applicant Assistance unit (1-800-697-6947)
- VA benefits regional offices are closed
- Public Affairs and unfunded outreach to veterans, including social media, VetResources emails and responses to press inquiries
- Grounds maintenance or placement of permanent headstones at VA cemeteries
- Applications for pre-need burial at VA cemeteries
- Printing of new Presidential Memorial Certificates
- VA Central Office outreach to state, county, tribal, municipal, faith-based and community-based partners

Are VA benefits still going out during the government shutdown?

Yes, VA benefits, including compensation and pension payments, are still going out.

The following VA services are still available and operating as usual despite the shutdown:

- VA Medical Centers, Outpatient Clinics and Vet Centers
- VA benefits, including compensation, pension, education and housing benefits
- Burials at VA national cemeteries, applications for headstones, markers and burial benefits
- The Board of Veterans' Appeals is continuing decisions on veterans' cases
- Call Centers:
- VA's primary call center (1-800-MyVA411) and the Veterans Crisis Line (Dial 988, Press 1)
- The VA Benefit Hotline (1-800-827-1000)
- The National Cemetery Scheduling Office (1-800-535-1117)

- Suicide prevention programs, homelessness services and caregiver support

Congress members criticize VA's shutdown response; Collins blames Democrats

Several members of the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees have criticized Collins and the VA's response to the shutdown.

The Oct. 7 letter, which was signed by, among others, House Veterans' Affairs Committee Ranking Member Mark Takano (D-CA) and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Ranking Member Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), asked Collins to reverse what the lawmakers called the "weaponization" of the shutdown.

The letter said the VA has not responded to communications from members of Congress, including inquiries from veteran constituents.

According to the letter, the VA's Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs said that it cannot respond to communications from members of Congress during the shutdown. The lawmakers say this claim is misleading, adding that the office should be able to respond to communications by utilizing non-furloughed employees or prioritizing carryover funding at its disposal.

"The fact that VA has chosen not to prioritize communication with Congress on policy matters is clearly a leadership decision and a direct affront to our constitutional duty to oversee the work of the Department," the letter says.

Collins, meanwhile, has repeatedly blamed Democrats for the shutdown. In an op-ed for The Hill published on Oct. 10, three days after the congressional letter addressed to him was released, Collins called the actions of Congressional Democrats "one of the biggest displays of hypocrisy in recent history."

"Democrats in Congress have accused the Trump Administration of destroying the Department of Veterans Affairs, cutting benefits and services, and hurting veterans along the way," he wrote. "There is no truth to their claims, of course."

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.

Charles Young, Wisconsin

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

This month, Charles attended a veteran round table meeting held by Congressman Scott Fitzgerald. There were 16 veterans present, with representation from members of The American Legion, VFW, DAV, and Vietnam Veterans of America. The services represented at the discussion were Army, Women's Army Corps, Navy, Air Force, and Marines. This discussion was focused on veteran issues that the Congressman can hopefully address and legislation to support regarding these issues.

Thank you, Charles, 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 10/17, there are no hearings scheduled.

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

AMERICAN LEGION

LEGISLATIVE WEEKLY

October 24, 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.

Take Our Government Shutdown Impact Survey!

As Congress continues to debate federal funding, we know the government shutdown is creating real challenges for veterans, servicemembers, families, and communities across the country. The results will help us advocate more effectively for those feeling the effects of the shutdown. You can find the link to our anonymous survey here.

NEED TO FIND YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS?

https://www.votervoice.net/AmericanLegion/Address

TOP GRASSROOTS DEPARTMENTS

Kansas	**504**
Wisconsin	**314**
Tennessee	**221**
New York	**196**
Alaska	**130**

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

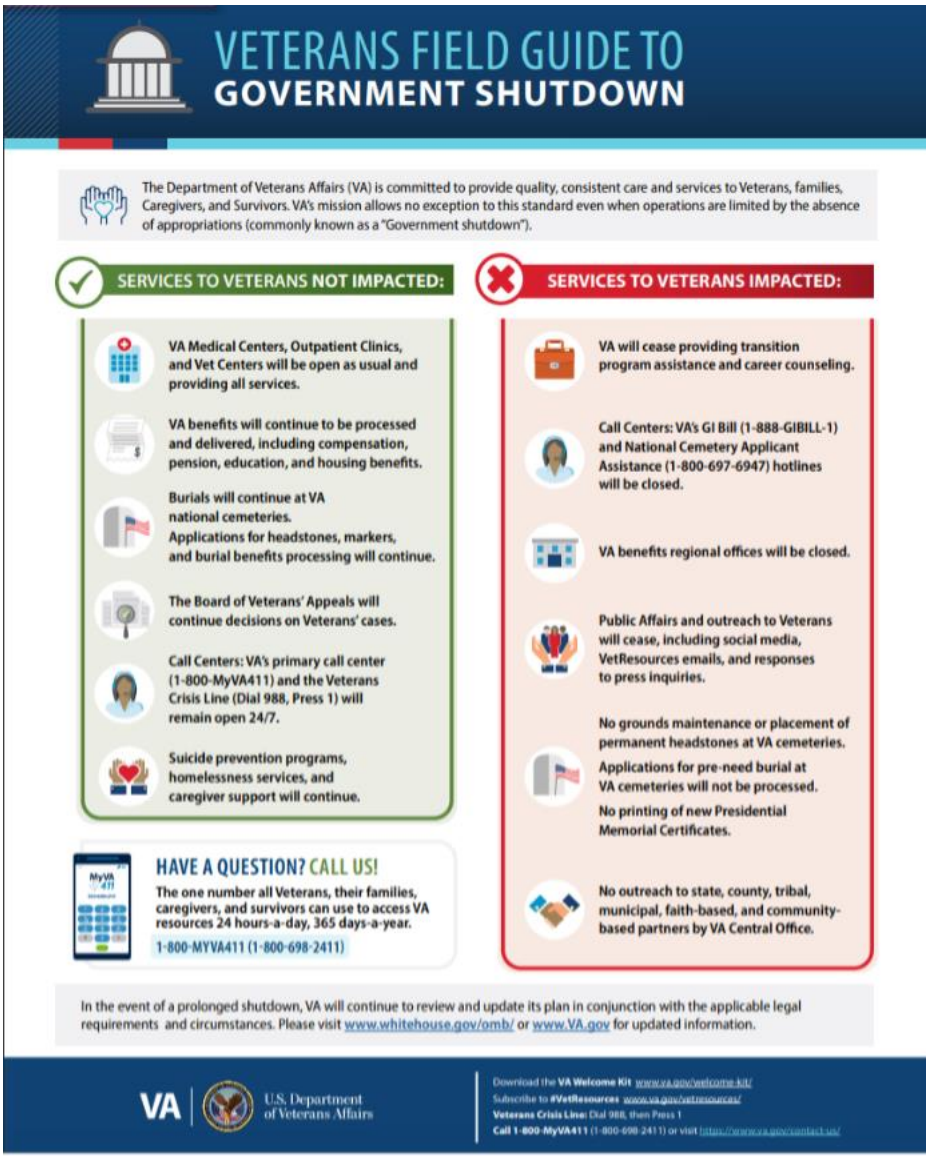
GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN INFORMATION

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.



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

SHUTDOWN IS 'HOLDING MY VETERANS HOSTAGE,' VA CHIEF SAYS

This article's original publication can be found here

Despite the Veterans Affairs Department keeping most of its employees working through the government shutdown, the agency's leader said on Wednesday, the funding lapse is having significant impacts on key services for former military members.

Around 30,000 VA employees are currently furloughed as a result of the shutdown, VA Secretary Doug Collins told reporters, which is nearly double the number the department originally planned to send home without immediate pay. That figure will climb higher next week when VA furloughs most of its central office, but still represents less than 10% of its workforce.

Virtually all of the Veterans Health Administration, where most of VA's employees work, is currently working and getting paid on time using multi-year funds. Disability and other payments are still going out, though Veterans Benefits Administration staff are currently working without pay. Most of the National Cemetery Administration is furloughed, Collins said, though some employees have been brought back to allow burials to continue.

Still, the secretary said, veterans are missing out on critical services, such as vocational training and employment assistance for those transitioning out of the military.

"Right now they can't do it. They're shut down," Collins said. "So we have some people who are trying to make a life outside of their time in the service, and they can't do this because Congress has decided that they want to shut the government down."

More than 100,000 enrollees in VA's Veteran Readiness and Employment program are not currently receiving counseling or case management services, VA said, and 16,000 separating service members are missing out on briefings on the transition to civilian life. It added that more than 900,000 beneficiaries in VA's education programs cannot contact the dedicated phone line.

In a letter to Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., on Wednesday, Collins said the shutdown was making veterans question "the government's commitment to those who have served."

"Veterans should never have to doubt that their nation will uphold its commitments to them, and our dedicated employees should have to worry about feeding their families or paying the bills, especially as so many continue to work tirelessly every day," Collins said.

Collins has at times ostracized the VA workforce through his various efforts to trim it and his comments that the department does not exist to provide jobs. On Wednesday, he echoed the Trump administration's position that existing federal law does not require VA to provide back pay to furloughed workers—in contravention of the statute Congress passed and President Trump signed into law in 2019—and such retroactive compensation will require new legislation.

In response to the letter, Schumer criticized Collins' handling of VA and for Republicans' unwillingness to extend subsidies to Affordable Care Act premiums in exchange for reopening the government.

"Spare me the lecture from an administration that's delivering a one-two punch to America's heroes: first, firing thousands of VA workers and canceling lifesaving care, and now, threatening to cripple 267,000 veterans with crushing health costs by refusing to extend ACA tax credits," Schumer said. Collins has sought to shed 30,000 employees from VA, though those workers mostly left by accepting voluntary incentives.

Veterans service organizations have also called on lawmakers to reopen the government, laying out more ways their members are being hurt.

"The graves are unmaintained in full measure," Mario Marquez, American Legion's government affairs executive director, said last week. "How much more disrespect can you demonstrate than that alone?

He lamented the pause on transition services and said that in the midst of a suicide epidemic, the normal outreach efforts are not happening.

"So these problems are not administrative," Marquez said. "They are a moral failure by our government."

Democrats in Congress have accused Collins of "weaponizing" the shutdown by exacerbating its impacts. They specifically pointed to VA's decision to cut off assistance with congressional inquiries seeking to resolve issues raised by veteran constituents and noted that VA should use the multi-year funding Congress has provided to keep those services running.

“We take those concerns or their specific cases directly to VA and advocate on their behalf,” Democrats from the House and Senate VA Committees said. “Thus, any delay in responding to this outreach or dispatching their cases will cause harm to the veterans we serve.”

Collins on Wednesday did not address that concern directly, but said the issues impacting VA would be resolved if the shutdown were ended.

“It's time for my friends across the aisle to vote to open the government,” Collins said. “Quit holding my veterans hostage.”

NDAA WORK ONGOING AS SHUTDOWN CONTINUES

This article’s original publication can be found here

TOPLINES

1. NDAA talks moving: Armed Services staff are working hard to reconcile the House and Senate versions of the fiscal 2026 National Defense Authorization Act, but it may be a while before members can sign off on a bicameral compromise and put it up for votes.

2. Non-negotiable: Top Democratic leaders called on President Donald Trump to negotiate an end to a partial government shutdown that is set to become the second longest in modern history this week.

3. Aviation bill advances: The Senate Commerce Committee advanced a bill Tuesday that would close a “loophole” in aviation safety protocol that federal investigations found led to the fatal January midair collision at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport.

FULL BRIEFING

1. NDAA's progress called slow and steady

Armed Services staff are working hard to reconcile the House and Senate versions of the fiscal 2026 National Defense Authorization Act, but it may be a while before members can sign off on a bicameral compromise and put it up for votes.

Sen. Jack Reed of Rhode Island, the top Democrat on the Armed Services Committee, said in a brief interview Tuesday that House and Senate Armed Services aides have made considerable progress in negotiations but still have work to do before members can get involved.

Aides generally tackle the relatively easier issues before leaving the most contentious or impactful ones for lawmakers to resolve. The hardest issues of all are generally only settled at the end of the process by the chairs and ranking members.

Reed said authorizers have not yet set a deadline for finishing their work.

“A lot of the staff discussion is trying to sort of pave the way, and it'll give us a better idea of how long it will take members to get together and talk over the issues,” Reed said. “We’re in full stage now.”

John M. Donnelly has the full story here.

2. Trump rebuffs Democratic calls to negotiate end to shutdown

Top Democratic leaders called on President Donald Trump Tuesday to negotiate an end to a partial government shutdown that is set to become the second longest in modern history this week.

Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer, D-N.Y., said he and House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, D-N.Y., reached out to Trump to urge him to sit down with Democrats to address their party’s main motivation for resisting a stopgap spending bill: the extension of expiring enhanced health care tax credits.

But Trump made clear his unwillingness to negotiate with Democrats during the shutdown at two White House appearances Tuesday. "We will not be extorted on this crazy plot of theirs," he told Senate Republicans at a Rose Garden lunch.

“I would like to meet with both of them, but I set one little caveat," Trump told reporters later in the Oval Office, when asked about meeting with Schumer and Jeffries. "I will only meet if they let the country open," he said, later clarifying, "The government has to be open."

With the funding lapse entering its fourth week, Republicans sought to display unity from the White House on Tuesday as the administration added another pressure tactic against Democrats. Sen. Jerry Moran, R-Kan., said U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer didn’t appear at a Senate Commerce-Justice-Science Appropriations Subcommittee hearing that was initially scheduled for Tuesday because the “administration indicated that they were not having their personnel here during the shutdown.”

Jacob Fulton and Aris Folley have more here.

3. Senate Commerce advances bill sparked by Army helo crash

The Senate Commerce Committee advanced a bill Tuesday that would close a "loophole" in aviation safety protocol that federal investigations found led to the fatal January midair collision at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport.

The voice vote on the bipartisan bill (S 2503) is the first significant movement on legislation addressing the crash involving an Army Blackhawk helicopter and a commercial jetliner, killing 67 people. The panel also approved a slate of nominations and other bills.

"[The bill] closes a dangerous loophole that allowed military aircraft to operate in domestic skies without communicating their position quickly and accurately to other aviators like commercial aircraft do," Chairman Ted Cruz, R-Texas, said during the markup. "As National Transportation Safety Board Chairwoman Jennifer Homendy has said, this legislation will save lives."

The NTSB released a preliminary report in March that said the Army helicopter had its ADS-B (Automatic Dependent Surveillance - Broadcast) Out system disabled during the flight.

The bill would require military aircraft to operate ADS-B Out systems immediately upon enactment of the law, narrowing the exceptions to the requirement. Military training flights would have to have the system on.

Valerie Yurk has the full story here.

PLUS-UPS

Vets' SBIR plea: A coalition of 1.6 million veteran-owned small businesses is urging lawmakers to resolve their differences and reauthorize the Small Business Innovation Research and Small Business Technology Transfer programs.

The programs, which bankroll some $4 billion a year in mostly defense-oriented small-business research, expired on Sept. 30. They cannot restart without a new authorization even when the partial government shutdown ends.

Sen. Joni Ernst, R-Iowa, chair of the Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee, has filed a three-year reauthorization (S 853) that would rewrite the programs' rules in a way that many companies object to, largely because her measure would cap at $75 million the cumulative value of deals any one entity can receive. A similar bill (HR 4777) has been introduced in the House.

Sen. Edward J. Markey of Massachusetts, the panel's top Democrat, has proposed a simple one-year extension of the programs, a bill (HR 5100) the House passed last month. Ernst has blocked that bill.

"Since their inception, SBIR and STTR have helped create hundreds of thousands of American jobs, generated breakthrough technologies in defense, energy, healthcare, and cybersecurity, and spurred local economic growth in every state," wrote Scott Jensen, executive director of the National Veterans Small Business Coalition, in an Oct. 20 letter to Ernst and Markey.

Veteran to veteran: A group of 22 House Republicans who are military veterans urged Senate Democrats to join their Republican colleagues in supporting a short-term continuing resolution (HR 5371) that would reopen the government, citing the need to continue paying troops.

Their letter, led by Rep. Jen Kiggans, R-Va., and Rep. Nick LaLota, R-N.Y., was addressed specifically to the seven Senate Democrats who are veterans. If those seven senators supported the stopgap measure, the House lawmakers noted, it would have enough support to pass.

"Let us be clear: passing this continuing resolution is not a concession by one side or the other," they wrote. "It is an act of solidarity with those who continue to serve."

BILLS TO PAY FEDERAL WORKERS STALL, BUT SENATORS READY TO COMPROMISE

This article's original publication can be found here

Key senators of both parties said they would try to find a way to pay all federal employees during the partial government shutdown after the Senate blocked consideration of dueling proposals Thursday.

Sens. Ron Johnson, R-Wis., and Chris Van Hollen, D-Md., who authored competing bills, talked up the possibility of brokering a compromise after both of their measures were blocked from advancing on the floor. But a provision in Van Hollen's bill to prohibit the administration from conducting layoffs during the shutdown remained a key sticking point.

Johnson's bill (S 3012) would allow paychecks to flow for troops and “excepted” federal employees who are required to work without pay during the shutdown. Van Hollen's bill would also cover furloughed employees.

"I really don't have an objection to paying furloughed workers," Johnson told reporters. "They're going to get paid anyway. So let's figure out those areas of agreement. I mean, we're pretty darn close."

Van Hollen likewise expressed support for finding a compromise. "All Democrats would like to move forward," he said. "The difference is we don't want any federal employee to be punished for a shutdown they have nothing to do with. And if we can find a way with Sen. Johnson, Republicans, to accomplish that goal, then we can."

And Johnson appeared optimistic that a compromise could be reached in short order. "I think we can fix it over the weekend," he said. "We can maybe even fix it today, but again, we're going to have to vote on things, but we will work hard."

When asked if a compromise bill could get a vote next week, Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., told reporters: "We'll see. I mean, if there's headway made over the weekend, and obviously we're coordinating with Ron and his team, and we'll see where it goes."

A compromise couldn't come soon enough for hundreds of thousands of federal employees who are beginning to feel the squeeze of a partial government shutdown that is more than three weeks old. An Office of Management and Budget official said Thursday that “over 500,000 civilian federal employees will miss a full paycheck tomorrow.”

But a big hurdle to a deal centered on whether Republicans could stomach restricting President Donald Trump from laying off more workers during the shutdown, language that Democrats are seeking. White House budget director Russ Vought has said plans call for laying off more than 10,000 workers, although a federal judge has temporarily blocked more layoffs, known as reductions-in-force.

"Now it's just kind of down to reductions in force, which, I don't want to completely constrain the president, but I don't mind making sure that Congress has a say in this as well," Johnson said. "So I'm actually quite hopeful."

And any bill that passes the Senate to pay federal workers would then require a vote in the House, which has been in recess since Sept. 19, when it passed a continuing resolution to extend government funding through Nov. 21 (HR 5371). Senate Democrats have blocked that bill as they fight to extend enhanced health insurance subsidies that are set to expire at the end of the year.

"I'm quite sure they would," Johnson said, when asked whether he thinks the House would come back in session if his bill passed the Senate. "I've heard publicly the speaker say he would do that if we passed this bill."

Competing bills blocked

The procedural vote to take up Johnson's bill was 54-45, falling six votes short of the 60 required to advance the measure under Senate rules. Three Democrats — Jon Ossoff and Raphael Warnock, both of Georgia, and John Fetterman of Pennsylvania — joined all Republicans in support of the bill.

The legislation marked the latest effort by Republicans to force Democrats to make politically difficult votes as the shutdown drags on. And it comes as the Senate prepared to leave town for the weekend, ensuring the shutdown would continue at least into next week.

Democrats had countered Johnson with a pair of bills of their own.

In addition to the Van Hollen bill, Sen. Gary Peters, D-Mich., had offered a more limited measure that would pay all federal workers only for the period from the Oct. 1 start of the shutdown to the day his legislation is enacted.

A Senate Democratic aide said the pair of bills was meant to provide two opportunities for Republicans to vote on legislation aimed at ensuring pay for all federal employees, as well as contractors and troops.

Both Democrats sought unanimous consent to take up their bills, but Johnson objected to both requests.

“I don’t think we should limit the chief executive’s ability to properly manage the federal government and make the tough decisions sometimes to reduce the workforce,” Johnson said. “Cut out some government functions.”

More relief bills on deck

Republicans could press Democrats again on the issue of paying federal employees. Thune has teed up two additional bills for potential consideration: one (S 3031) from Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, that would compensate Transportation Security Administration employees and air traffic controllers, and another (S 3030) from Sen. Dan Sullivan, R-Alaska, that would pay troops.

Republicans on Thursday sought to highlight the strain the shutdown is putting on the aviation industry, with Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy making an appearance on Capitol Hill to discuss the staffing issues that have started to pile up, causing flight delays across the country.

Senators could face a vote on an additional pressure point – funding for the food stamps program. Sen. Josh Hawley, R-Mo., has introduced a bill that would fund the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and said he intends to ask for unanimous consent to either pass the measure or get a vote scheduled.

Thune has demurred on the possibility for a floor vote on that legislation. But state officials warned that SNAP funding is expected to dry up at the end of the month if the shutdown continues and no action is taken. Hawley said Thursday he had no commitment from leadership to take up his bill but was working on getting bipartisan support for it.

Thune was asked Thursday whether Republicans will move for more votes on individual bills like those offered by Sullivan and Cruz in the coming days to continue to up the pressure on Democrats during the shutdown.

“We'll see,” he responded. “I mean, obviously the best answer to this, the best solution always, is open up the government. Everybody gets paid, and make sure that anybody who’s working today gets paid.”

Work on full-year appropriations bills, meanwhile, has continued to stall after at one point seeming like a potential route out of the shutdown. And Democrats are doubling down on their resistance to the House-passed continuing resolution, with a 12th Senate vote on the measure coming up short yet again on Wednesday.

All the while, the Nov. 21 funding deadline included in the GOP stopgap bill is nearing, and Republicans have acknowledged that the shutdown is likely to force them to seek a longer funding extension.

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Allan Jensen, Washington

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This month, Allan is the VoterVoice top power advocate, having sent over 130 messages to his Congressional representatives in the past 30 days. Way to go, Allan!

Thank you, Allan, for your report and the time you have dedicated to the Legion's legislative priorities.

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You can find relevant legislation and the Legion's stance on them in the key legislation section of VoterVoice.

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UPCOMING CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS

As of 10/24, the following hearings are scheduled:

- Tuesday, October 28, 9:30 AM: Senate Committee on Armed Services, Full Committee Nomination hearing -- "*To Consider the Nominations of: Mr. Marc J. Berkowitz to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Space Policy; Dr. Joseph S. Jewell to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Science and Technology; Mr. James R. Caggy to be Assistant Secretary of the Defense for Mission Capabilities; and Mr. Brendan P. Rogers to be Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Energy, Installations and Environment"*
- Wednesday, October 29, 4:00 PM: Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs Oversight hearing -- "*Putting Veterans First: Is the Current VA Disability System Keeping Its Promise?"*
- Thursday, October 30, 9:30 AM: Senate Committee on Armed Services, Full Committee Nomination hearing -- "*To Consider the Nomination of: Vice Admiral Richard A. Correll, USN to be Admiral and Commander, United States Strategic Command"*

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

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AMERICAN LEGION

LEGISLATIVE WEEKLY

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

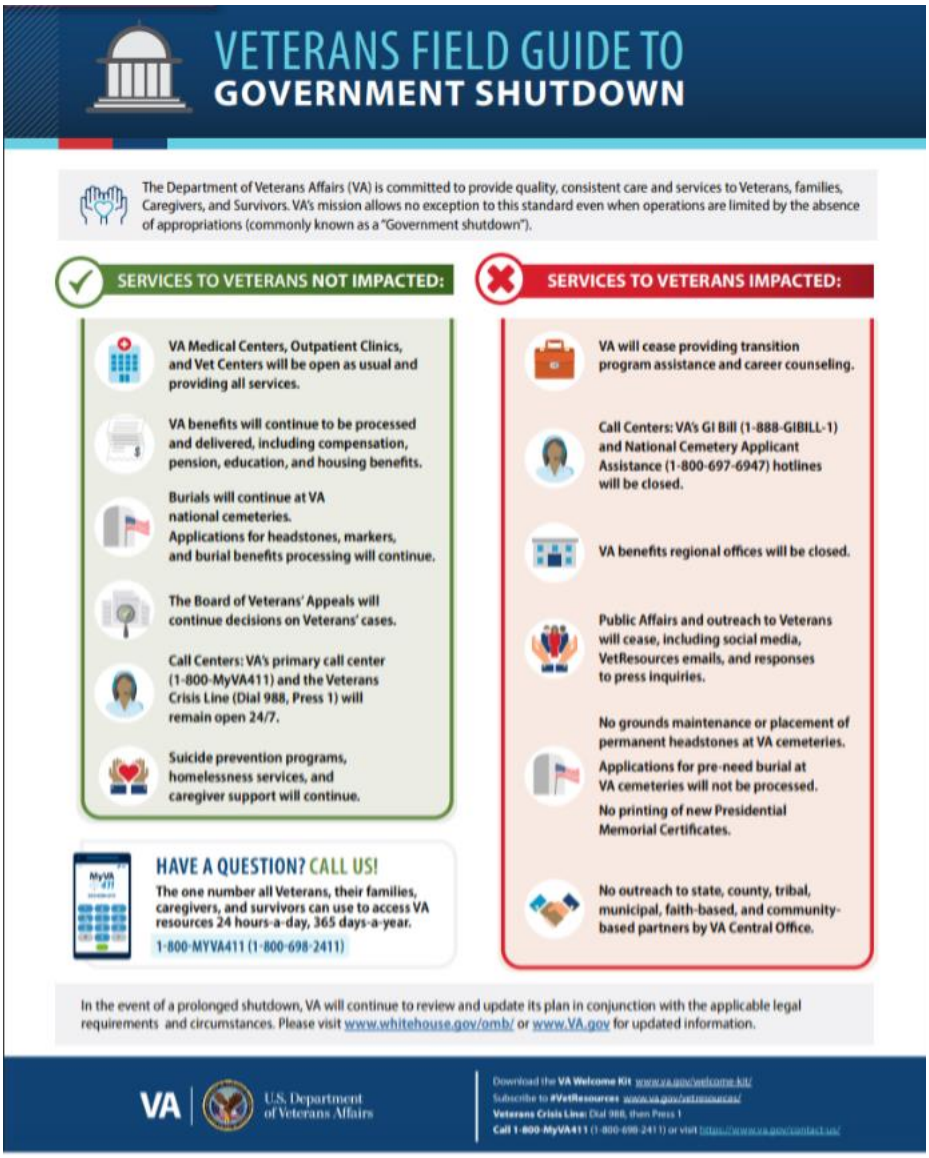
GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN INFORMATION

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.



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 paydate.

"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*"

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