

National Legislative Division Weekly

GRASSROOTS ACTION PRIORITIES

The American Legion continues to reinforce preparations for a possible government shutdown. We continue to monitor and advocate for the [Pay Our Troops Act](#) (H.R. 5641), which currently has 112 bipartisan cosponsors. The current continuing resolution expires November 17, and the Legion is working with Congress to advance appropriate funding bills.

Additionally, we are giving our support to the [Keep Our Border Agents Paid Act](#) (S. 2999), which would ensure that U.S. Customs and Border Protection and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement are paid in the event of a government shutdown.

Finally, Congress is running out of time to pass the [Afghan Adjustment Act](#) (H.R. 4627 / S. 2327). The American Legion urges Congress to act quickly and uphold our promise to our Afghan allies who fought bravely against the Taliban. To contact your representative and encourage them to support the [Afghan Adjustment Act](#), you can click [here](#).

The American Legion supports the Pay our Troops Act and encourages all Legionnaires to contact their members of Congress and ask them to support the legislation. Click [here](#) to reach out today.

VA BENEFITS UNDERRECEIVED BY NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE MEMBERS

In a report published this week, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that members of the reserve components are up to [20% less likely to be approved](#) for disability compensation than their active component peers. Because [National Guard and Reservists are generally eligible for VA benefits](#), researchers were left with the question of why they were approved at lower rates than active duty veterans.



[GAO identified two primary barriers](#) that reserve components face when applying for benefits: restrictions on reporting health issues during service, and an inability of Veterans' Affairs (VA) claims processor to locate documents and evidence of service-related health decline. The issue of documenting and reporting health problems is caused in part by [incomplete data processing within the VA/Department of Defense \(DOD\) Identity Repository \(VADIR\)](#). [VADIR](#) is designed to keep electronic copies of military service information, which could help Reservists and National Guard members prove

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that their disability occurred during and because of service. However, GAO identified a [significant gap in data collection](#) within VA and DOD especially for servicemembers who separated before 1985.

Moreover, [reporting health issues before separation](#), which is the most likely way to be approved for disability, has extreme limitations. For example, reserve components are not considered to be service-disabled if the injury occurs [during drill week](#). Even if National Guard members or Reservists sustain a debilitating injury in active duty, they are only considered service-disabled if the injury occurred on an assignment that lasts more than [30 days](#).

[The second barrier](#) found in the GAO's report, gaps in VA data and ineffective record tacking, largely affects what are known as a "Line of Duty (LOD) Determination." [LOD determinations](#) evaluate whether an injury or disease was incurred during duty. While these are the most effective way to ensure approval for disability compensation, [official LOD determinations are "frequently scattered, lost, or never existed."](#) Moreover, LOD determinations are [ineffective if symptoms of injury or illness did not appear until after service](#), even if they are result of duty. In conjunction with the restrictions on reporting during drill weeks or short, active duty missions, many reserve component members are denied the benefits they have earned.

To help correct the inequitable disability assessment of the reserve components, GAO made [14 recommendations](#) to VA and DOD. These recommendations in part focused on providing reserve components with simple and easily accessible modes of reporting health conditions, as well as clear guidelines for disability compensation eligibility. The other key component of these recommendations was to ensure that VA claims processors should have access to reliable and holistic data on reserve component members' service and health status.

NATIONAL VETERANS SMALL BUSINESS WEEK



This week, the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) celebrated its 10th annual [National Veterans Small Business Week](#). From seminars to mixers and celebrations, SBA applauded veterans and military families' business successes and highlighted resources to help other veterans' and service members' start their dream businesses. In a [video](#) promoting the week's events, Administrator Isabel Guzman said that

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veterans’ “impact as entrepreneurs and our nation’s economy is great”, as they employ over 5 million Americans and adding approximately \$1.3 trillion in GDP annually.

The incredible effect of veterans and military families on the U.S. economy was applauded by lawmakers in every corner of the country this week. [Representative Roger Williams \(R-TX-25\)](#), who serves as Chairman of the House Small Business Committee, said, “Our nation’s heroes own nearly two million businesses, almost all of which are small, and continue to serve their communities in this manner. They are natural leaders who play a critical role in our economy, and on behalf of this Committee I thank them for their continued service to this great nation.”

The House Small Business Committee [also received a resolution](#) from Representative Jason Crow (D-CO-6) and 16 co-sponsors reiterating the House of Representative’s support for National Veterans Small Business Week. The resolution promises to support SBA’s efforts to elevate veteran-owned small businesses such as entrepreneurship trainings and contracting opportunities.

Rep. Crow and his peers in the House of Representative have taken meaningful action this year, proving that the resolution is not an empty promise. In March, the House passed [H.R. 502](#) to make sure service members and veterans are repaid for contributions towards their Post-9/11 GI Bill Education Assistance. The House also overwhelmingly supported the reauthorization of the [VET-TEC program](#), which provides educational assistance to servicemembers who are entering the tech industry. Most recently, all 410 representatives who were present for the vote approved the [Isakson-Roe Education Oversight Expansion Act](#), which helps ensure that predatory institutions do not take advantage of veterans’ and military families’ GI Bill education benefits. All three of these bills have been presented to the Senate for consideration.

As stated by Representative Rogers and SBA Administrator Guzman, our veterans’ and servicemembers are as indispensable to the American economy as they are for national security. If you would like to learn more about resources and veterans’ entrepreneurial opportunities from SBA, you can click [here](#).

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.

Cynthia and Roger Boehnlein, Ohio

The Legislative Division is pleased to name not just one, but two wonderful Legion advocates as “Legionnaire of the Week.” While Mr. and Mrs. Boehnlein, Department of Ohio, were in Washington, D.C. they met with the office of Representative Max Miller (R-OH-7). In their meeting, the Boehnleins discussed the importance of Buddy Check Week and suicide prevention in the military community.

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They also stressed the importance of the *Pay Our Troops Act* and the *Pay The Coast Guard Act*. In the words of Mrs. Boehnlein, “We cannot let our troops down.” The Boehnleins left Rep. Miller’s Office a copy of The American Legion’s priorities for the 118th Congress.

Cynthia and Roger, thank you for taking the time to speak with Representative Miller’s office. Your efforts are greatly appreciated. If you visit Washington, D.C. again, we would love to have you visit our office!

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 me at kryan@legion.org.

LEGISLATIVE DIVISION UPDATES

This week, both National Commander Daniel J. Seehafer and National Legislative Commission Chair Patricia Harris visited Washington, D.C. Commander Seehafer and Chair Harris visited with many Senators and Representatives to make sure The American Legion’s voice is heard across Capitol Hill.



UPCOMING CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS

On Tuesday, November 7th at 10:45 AM EST, the House Veterans’ Affairs Committee will hold a hearing titled “Veterans Serving Veterans: The Impact of America’s Businesses on Veteran Employment and Opportunity.” This hearing will be livestreamed [here](#).

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On Wednesday, November 8th at 12:00 PM EST, the House Veterans' Affairs Committee Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs will hold a hearing on pending legislation. This hearing can be livestreamed [here](#).