

National Legislative Division Weekly

CONGRESS

The country is officially using “extreme measures” to service the national debt. The White House and House Democrats have made clear they are not interested in negotiating for cuts to Social Security or Medicare in order to get Republicans on board to raise the debt limit. Senate Republicans appear to be stepping back from their House colleagues’ fight. This week, Senate Minority Leader McConnell (R-KY) told reporters the issue should be negotiated between the White House and House Speaker McCarthy (R-CA); he wants nothing to do with it.

House Armed Services Committee (HASC) chair Rep. Rogers (R-AL), on Wednesday, named his subcommittee chairs. He will also be creating a new panel on military quality of life, to be chaired by Rep. Bacon (R-NE). The other chairs are:

- Military Personnel Subcommittee: Rep. Banks (R-IN)
- Readiness Subcommittee: Rep. Waltz (R-FL)
- Tactical Air & Land Force Subcommittee: Rep. Wittman (R-VA)
- Seapower and Projection Forces Subcommittee: Rep. Kelly (R-MS)
- Strategic Forces Subcommittee: Rep. Lamborn (R-CO)
- Cyber, Innovative Technologies, and Information Systems Subcommittee: Rep. Gallagher (R-WI)
- Intelligence and Special Operations Subcommittee: Rep. Bergman (R-MI)

All of these subcommittee chairs were ranking members on a subcommittee last year except for Bergman. Gallagher and Banks swapped subcommittees for the current Congress.

Republican membership of the HASC will include 20 returning members and 11 new members. The Democrats named five freshman to the HASC.

Democratic membership on the Senate Armed Services Committee will remain the same as the last Congress, according to a release late Thursday afternoon.

The House Veterans Affairs Committee, now chaired by Rep. Bost (R-IL), has six returning GOP members and eight new GOP members. Nine of the GOP members are also veterans, creating a very personal approach to legislating on this committee.

Rep. Guthrie (R-KY) now chairs the Health Subcommittee of the House Energy & Commerce Committee. He has told reporters he intends to focus on enforcing price transparency rules, prior authorization for drugs and procedures, and drug pricing.

SIX VETERANS JOIN THE HOUSE VETERANS’ AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Six new members of the House Veterans’ Affairs Committee (HVAC) are veterans, including three former Navy SEALs.

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Their appointments were announced Jan. 25. They are:

- **Eli Crane, (R-AZ)**, served as a Navy SEAL for 14 years.
- **Scott Franklin, (R-FL)**, retired as a commander after spending 26 years in the Navy, 14 on active duty and 12 in the Naval Reserve.
- **Jen Kiggins, (R-VA)**, was a Navy helicopter pilot for 10 years. As a veteran, she hopes to advocate for increased military spending. She wants to focus on policies providing funding for military bases and installations, equipping military forces with innovative technologies, and increasing military training. She staunchly opposes defense cuts, which she believes jeopardize military strength.
- **Morgan Luttrell, (R-TX)**, who was a Navy SEAL and is the twin brother of Marcus Luttrell. In an interview for an online program about brain injuries and PTSD produced by a PBS affiliate station, Luttrell said the Department of Veterans Affairs is “bogged down in policy and procedure.” He added that the agency does not provide sufficient treatment resources for many veterans, especially those with complex mental health needs in the aftermath of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.
- **Keith Self, (R-TX)**, is a retired Army Ranger and a member of American Legion Post 10 in McKinney, Texas.
- **Derrick Van Orden, (R-WI)**, is a retired Navy SEAL and a member of American Legion Post 68 in Prairie du Chien, Wis.

The committee is charged with recommending legislation that expands, curtails or adjusts existing laws relating to veterans' benefits.

The committee chairman is Mike Bost, a Marine Corps veteran.

LEGIONNAIRE FINALLY RECEIVES NACY CROSS FOR 1952 HEROICS

More than seven decades after his extraordinary aerial achievement, retired Navy Lt. Royce Williams received the Navy Cross on Jan. 20 in San Diego.

Carlos Del Toro, the Secretary of the Navy, presented the Navy Cross to Williams, an American Legion member, at the San Diego Air and Space Museum. Hundreds of American Legion members, Navy officials, military supporters and others attended the ceremony, which can be viewed [here](#).

“If I’m not showing it, I’m absolutely thrilled,” Williams said during the ceremony. “I never expected any recognition.”

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Retired US Navy Captain Royce Williams receives the Navy Cross at the San Diego Air & Space Museum.

In attendance was Legionnaire Steve Lewandowski, who is spearheading efforts to get Williams an upgrade to the Medal of Honor. “I’m really happy for Royce to finally get this recognition for something that is quite impressive,” he said. “While this is a wonderful development it does not preclude him from receiving the Medal of Honor.”

Lewandowski and Williams are both members of American Legion Post 416 in Encinitas, Calif.

On Nov. 18, 1952, Williams shot down four Russian MiGs in just over a half hour off the Korean Peninsula, an aerial feat that has never been duplicated. “I’d never worked so hard at flying an airplane,” he told American Legion Magazine [for a story](#) featured in the November 2017 issue.

Upon landing his heavily damaged plane on the USS Oriskany, Williams was sworn to keep the incident a secret, which he did for more than 50 years until it was declassified. Senior officials were concerned that news of the firefight might drag the Soviets into a broader conflict with Korea. Additionally, the United States didn’t want to reveal the existence of the brand-new National Security Agency (NSA), which had agents on board Oriskany.

How did Williams, who earlier received the Silver Star, keep it a secret for so long?

“It’s a puzzle,” he told the magazine in 2017. “I don’t know. The Boy Scout in me, I guess.”

The National Executive Committee threw its support behind the Medal of Honor effort when it passed Resolution 70 in August 2017, which called for petitioning Congress and the Department of Defense. Others who are supporting Williams for the Medal of Honor include more than 115 admirals and generals, the Boy Scouts of America and members of Congress.

“Today was a great moment for Royce,” Lewandowski said. “But it’s a little short of our goal. We are going to continue to pursue getting him the recognition he truly deserves, the Medal of Honor.”

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2023 WASHINGTON CONFERENCE

The American Legion's Washington Conference will be back in person in 2023. This event allows our organization's leadership to meet with elected officials to discuss legislative initiatives and priorities important to Legion members and their families. It also provides a forum that allows Legionnaires to hear from senators, representatives, and officials from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) as they address our members at the conference.

To learn more information, please click [here](#).

LEGIONNAIRE OF THE WEEK

In an effort 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.

Allan Jensen, Washington

This week, we are excited to recognize Allan Jensen from the Department of Washington for meeting with Rep. Larsen (D-WA) and his staff at his district office in Bellingham, Washington. Mr. Jensen used his time with the Congressman to discuss his committee assignments and his legislative priorities for the 118th Congress. He also discussed local issues and how they are affected by recently-passed legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Jensen!

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 kisaacson@legion.org.

UPCOMING HEARINGS

There will be no hearings next week.