

## National Legislative Division Weekly

### GRASSROOTS ALERT: SUPPORT NEEDED THIS WEEK ON VETERANS' CAREGIVERS

In a significant move last week, the House Armed Services Committee approved the Major Richard Star Act, signifying a critical milestone for the legislation. Veterans forced to retire due to combat injuries have been denied retirement compensation, and it is time we ask Congress to finally correct this injustice. The American Legion needs your help to get this critical piece of legislation onto the House floor for a vote!

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

### CONGRESS

[By Matthew Adams/Stars and Stripes]

Tackling veteran homelessness is part of a White House announcement Thursday to spend \$3.1 billion to combat the overall crisis through community support grants.

The new measure is “the largest-ever, single-year investment ... to help communities address homelessness,” the Biden administration said in a statement.

About 33,000 veterans across the country lack access to permanent housing, down 11% since 2020 and down 55% since 2010, according to [the 2022 Point-in-Time Count](#) released by the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The VA has been addressing the issue of homeless veterans for the past two years with a target of placing 38,000 veterans into permanent housing. The VA exceeded that goal by finding more than 40,000 veterans a place to live in 2022.

The \$3.1 billion will be provided to HUD’s Continuum of Care Program, which awards funds for community groups and local governments to help provide support to families facing the threat of homelessness.

The money will not be solely earmarked for veterans, but the White House is encouraging officials with the Continuum of Care program to work with participants to “coordinate with local Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers to ensure these funds are effectively supporting veterans and their families.”

Other efforts in the new investment include \$11.5 million in legal services grants, a first of its kind, according to the White House, to help veterans obtain representation in landlord-tenant disputes, as well as assist in other court proceedings such as child support, custody or estate planning.

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“For veterans, legal support can be the difference between becoming homeless and having safe, stable housing,” VA Secretary Denis McDonough said in a statement. “With the award of these first-of-their-kind VA grants, more veterans will have the legal representation they deserve, which will increase their access to housing and employment.”

The Department of Labor Veterans’ Employment and Training Service is being awarded more than \$58 million to help connect homeless veterans with job opportunities. The money will go toward veterans learning occupational skills and participating in on-the-job training in fields such as manufacturing, construction, information technology and cybersecurity.

There also will be a new series of “boot camps” conducted by HUD and the VA to help VA medical centers and public housing agencies find veterans a place to live more quickly.

### SUPREME COURT ACCEPTS GI BILL CASE THAT COULD AFFECT 1.7 MILLION VETERANS

[[From Military.com](#)]

The U.S. Supreme Court has decided to hear a case on the handling of [Post-9/11 GI Bill](#) benefits by the [Department of Veterans Affairs](#) -- a proceeding that could provide additional education benefits for roughly 1.7 million veterans.

The court announced Monday that it would hear the case, Rudisill v. McDonough, which argues that service members enrolled in different versions of the GI Bill -- in Rudisill's case, the Montgomery GI Bill and the Post-9/11 GI Bill -- should be entitled to benefits under both programs up to a maximum of four years.

James Rudisill, while serving as an enlisted soldier, used 25 of his 36 months of eligibility under the Montgomery GI Bill to earn his undergraduate degree. He later became a commissioned officer and signed up for the Post-9/11 GI Bill, but he never used it while on active duty.

After he left the [Army](#), however, he applied to Yale Divinity School, intending to [pay](#) for it with his Post-9/11 benefits, and return to the Army as a chaplain. He believed he had 23 months of additional education benefits under a Korean War-era law that allows veterans to use benefits from any individual programs or combination up to 48 months.

But the VA said he only rated nine additional months, for a total of 36 -- the maximum allowable amount for each program -- saying the law that created the [Post-9/11 GI Bill](#) limited entitlement to one program or the other, based on the veteran's choice.

Rudisill went to court, and a federal district court agreed. The VA appealed, and in 2021, a three-judge panel of the [U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit upheld the ruling](#).

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The VA then petitioned for the case to be heard by the [full U.S. Court of Appeals, which overturned the previous rulings](#). The court issued an opinion saying that if a veteran has used some benefits under the Montgomery GI Bill program and elected to receive benefits under the Post-9/11 program, the benefits would be limited to one month, or a partial month, of entitlement under the Post-9/11 GI Bill for each month of unused benefits under the Montgomery GI Bill.

In their decision, the judges wrote that the statute was "unambiguous."

But Rudisill's attorneys said judges weren't looking at the entirety of the law, and they filed a petition to the Supreme Court.

"The [Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit] missed the forest for the trees. They missed the core protections in the GI bills going back to the original, which is that those who served in multiple qualified periods of service get to have the benefits of full benefits from those two periods of service up to 48 months," Misha Tseytlin, an attorney with the national law firm Troutman Pepper, said during an interview with Military.com.

After the court announcement on Monday, Rudisill said during an interview with Military.com that he felt "relieved, elated ... a whole pot of adjectives I could probably choose from," and that he continued his suit for the veterans he served alongside in combat.

Rudisill, who served across three periods of active duty -- from 2000 to 2002 in the Army, 2004 to 2005 in the Army [National Guard](#) and from 2007 to 2011 as an Army officer -- lost his spot at Yale but continued his divinity education while working as a special agent for the FBI.

He estimates, by his calculations, that he may still have a year of education benefits left. But, he adds, he continued the fight for other veterans in a similar situation.

"It was just the right thing to do. Over and over again, the VA has shown me and my buddies that I went to Iraq and Afghanistan with ... that if they are not held to account, these kinds of transgressions they make against the demographic they supposedly support [will] continue to happen," Rudisill said.

Rudisill's legal team must submit a brief to the court in the next 45 days. The Justice Department then has an opportunity to respond. Timothy McHugh, also an attorney with Troutman Pepper working on the case, said he expects oral arguments to take place in November or December.

He expressed optimism for his client and the veterans the case represents, saying that the justices likely wouldn't have taken the case if they agreed with the appellate court's decision.

"I think that's a significant sign that the court has decided to take this up," McHugh said

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### 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.

#### Jeremy Ehart, Kansas

This week, we are excited to recognize Jeremy Ehart Runnels from the Department of Kansas for meeting with the office of Senator (and Senate Veterans Affairs Committee Ranking Member) Jerry Moran at the Department of Kansas Headquarters. Jeremy and Department Commander Randy Frank welcomed Senator Moran's senior advisors and discussed the Legion's priorities for the year as well as issues identified with current legislation.

Thank you, Jeremy!

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](mailto:kisaacson@legion.org).

### UPCOMING HEARINGS

There are no hearings next week.