

National Legislative Division Weekly

LEGISLATIVE CHAIRMAN'S QUARTERLY CALL

The American Legion's Legislative Chairman's Quarterly Call will take place on Tuesday, September 26th at 7:00 P.M, and you are welcome to join!

This zoom webinar will discuss the current legislative landscape and how you can support ongoing American Legion grassroots initiatives. Please use the link below to register and receive instructions to join.

https://legion.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_mo8Wh1BvS4eQBT8sme3nQA

CONGRESS EYES PROTECTING MILITARY PAY AHEAD OF GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

[From: [Military Times](#)]

Lawmakers are prepping plans to guarantee paychecks for troops and in case of [a government shutdown next month](#), arguing that [jeopardizing military family finances](#) could hurt national security.

If successful, the moves would blunt some of the [potential impact of shuttering of federal services](#) by ensuring that servicemembers' pay , [including members of the Coast Guard](#), would continue uninterrupted. But Congress has only a week to adopt the legislation in order to head off any military paycheck problems.

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If lawmakers do not reach a short-term budget extension or full-year appropriations plan for government agencies by Oct. 1, the resulting budget lapse will [trigger a partial government shutdown](#), furloughing thousands of federal workers and shutting down non-essential military activities like family moves and some training operations.



*Congresswoman Jen Kiggans (R-VA),
author of the Pay Our Troops Act*

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Troops would still be required to report for duty but could miss their scheduled mid-October paychecks if the shutdown stretches from days into weeks. [In 2013, just hours before the start of a 16-day government shutdown](#) triggered by political fights on Capitol Hill, lawmakers overwhelmingly passed special legislation to prevent that salary stoppage for troops.

Late Thursday, [Rep. Jennifer Kiggans, R-Va.](#), introduced the Pay Our Troops Act, which mirrors those military pay protections from past government shutdown threats. Unlike previous legislation, however, her bill also includes the Coast Guard, which is funded through the Department of Homeland Security and has not received the same pay guarantees as the other service in the past.

“This should not be a partisan issue,” said Kiggans, a Navy veteran. “I would hope that all Democrats and Republicans should want to pay our military. The goal is to not shut down the government, but God forbid something like that happens, we need to have a backup plan.”

Earlier on Thursday, [Sen. Dan Sullivan, R-Wash. and a Marine Corps veteran](#), unsuccessfully pushed on the Senate floor for lawmakers to fast-track his proposal to guarantee Coast Guard pay in case of a shutdown. He has also introduced legislation protecting all military pay, similar to Kiggans’ measure. Outside advocates say the move is needed to reassure military families that their service and sacrifice is not being overlooked.

“It is unacceptable to allow those who have devoted their lives to this country to bear the brunt of political disagreements,” members of the Sea Service Family Foundation, U.S. Coast Guard Warrant Officers Association and Coast Guard Enlisted Association wrote in a letter backing Sullivan’s bill. “Our military personnel should never be used as pawns in legislative battles.”

[Kathy Roth-Douquet, founder and CEO of Blue Star Families](#), said that missing even a single paycheck could be potentially devastating for military families.

“We know that one in three service families have less than \$3,000 in savings — not enough to cover the cost of housing and daycare in most places,” she said in a statement. “Putting our families at financial risk puts our national security at risk, and we simply can’t allow that to happen.”

Efforts to pass budget bills have been stalled in recent weeks over disagreements related to total federal spending. Kiggans said she is frustrated by “the silly political games” behind the stalemate, but said she is confident that lawmakers will rally behind protecting military pay if a shutdown appears inevitable.

No timetable has been set for possible votes on either the House or Senate proposals, but lawmakers in both chambers have been warned that negotiations and debate on a host of measures will dominate congressional work next week.

SENATE QUASHES TUBERVILLE’S PROMOTION HOLD

On Wednesday, September 20th, the U.S. Senate confirmed U.S. Air Force chief General Charles Q. Brown as the [Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff](#).

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This promotion is the first sign of reversal on a months-long blockade of military promotion confirmations by Senator Tommy Tuberville (Ala.). The Senator, in an effort to overturn the Pentagon's reproductive health and abortion permissions, has single-handedly [blocked over three hundred military promotions](#), including General Brown's, since March. The unprecedented strategy employed by Tuberville forces the Senate to vote on each military promotion individually, which could take up to months according to his fellow senators.

Despite the opinions and positions of ninety-nine senators, one senator, in this case Sen. Tuberville, can [block business that requires unanimous consent](#). The military promotions blocked by the Senator require unanimous consent for confirmation and are usually confirmed in one bipartisan push. His aggressive tactic aims to force the Pentagon to change [a policy](#) that allows servicemembers to be reimbursed for any travel costs that might be accrued when crossing state lines for an abortion procedure. He claims that until the policy is changed, he will not allow the the confirmations to be performed as normal.

Although he made one attempt to [force one cloture around his own blockade](#), Tuberville's actions left Pentagon officials and other senators at an utter impasse; Democrats have been faced with [the options of spending months worth of days](#) confirming individual promotions or overturning the Pentagon's abortion travel policy that they support. For military officials and institutions, however, the outcome of Tuberville's blockade had a more personal, and likely painful, impact than it did for his peers in the Senate.

The delay of service chief confirmations and military promotions put undue stress on military men and women as well as their families, [Army Secretary Christine Wormuth shared with Military.com](#). With many of her peers performing two roles, the one of their promotion and of their former position, Wormuth says many officers and their families are straining under "a real and unfair burden."

On top of the added pressures in their professional lives, some military officers are feeling [the impact of their promotional holds at home](#) as well. Unclear about where they might be stationed next, many families are concerned about finding housing and schools for their children, and getting jobs for their spouses. Moreover, with salary being tied to rank, some families are not receiving the financial compensation promised that is deserved. Despite the known suffering of these families, Senator Tuberville reaffirmed that his "hold is still in place."

However, the rest of Senate has begun working around him to promote military officers, beginning on Wednesday with General Brown's promotion to Joint Chiefs Chairs. The Senate, who [overwhelmingly approved Chairman Brown](#) with an 83-11 vote, continued their work to confirm General Eric Smith as commandant of the Marine Corps with 92 yeas and 1. On Thursday afternoon, General Randy George also earned his long-awaited position of chief of staff of the Army.

While the confirmation of these key positions is positive for all branches of the Armed Services, [300 promotions](#) are still left out to dry as the end of the fiscal year quickly approaches. With other critical debates on appropriations in swing, it is uncertain when these promotions will be confirmed.

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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.

John Visci, California

Mr. John Visci from the Department of California is this week's Legionnaire of the Week. On September 19, he reported two separate meetings with Congressman Pete Aguilar (CA-33) to discuss the PACT Act process, and present holiday cards from local students at Post 106 in Redlands.

On behalf of the Legislative Division, thank you for your advocacy!

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.

UPCOMING HEARINGS

On September 26th at 3:00 PM, the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Technology Modernization will hold an oversight hearing on the official VA website, VA.gov. The hearing can be watched [here](#).

On September 28th at 10:00 AM, the House Committee on Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs will hold an oversight hearing on the VA's Fiduciary Program, to ensure that Veterans' benefits are effectively managed. The hearing can be watched [here](#).

On September 28th at 10:00 AM, the House Committee on Foreign Affairs is holding a full committee hearing on the Repeal of AUMFs from the Global War on Terror. The hearing can be watched [here](#).