

National Legislative Division Weekly

TELL CONGRESS: PASS THE AFGHAN ADJUSTMENT ACT

In the summer of 2021, our soldiers and Marines heroically evacuated tens of thousands of Afghan allies who fought with us against the Taliban. Now it's time for Congress to honor this nation's promise to our Afghan allies with real and lasting safety through the [bipartisan Afghan Adjustment Act](#).

Since July 2021, more than 70,000 at-risk Afghans have been relocated to the United States and have entered on what is called, “[humanitarian parole](#)” - allowing them to *temporarily* stay and work in the U.S. for up to two years. Despite fleeing from the Taliban, there is currently no direct pathway for lawful permanent residency and stability in the U.S. for most of our new Afghan neighbors. Without an adjustment act that creates this path, most Afghans would be forced to navigate the backlogged, complex and paperwork-intensive asylum process. Access to qualified and affordable legal representation, loss of critical documentation and required evidence during the hurried evacuation, the impact of trauma, and backlogs in processing create significant barriers that make the immigration process seem insurmountable.

The only viable pathway to protection for Afghans is the passage of the recently introduced Afghan Adjustment Act (H.R.8685/S.4787) which would provide our new Afghan neighbors with access to a more streamlined and efficient lawful permanent residency process.

This legislation echoes adjustment acts that Congress historically passed for every other generation of U.S. wartime evacuees.

Act Now! Tell Congress they MUST pass this critical legislation and ensure that this country keeps its promise to those who served our country's military.

[TAKE ACTION NOW](#)

LEGION INKS MOU ON CAMP LEJEUNE JUSTICE ACT

The American Legion and Bergmann & Moore have entered into a memorandum of understanding which the legal firm that provides veterans benefits consultation for accredited Legion service officers can help potential plaintiffs understand the Camp Lejeune Justice Act (CLJA).

The Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act of 2022 – better known as the PACT Act, signed into law Aug. 10, 2022 – opens the door for certain individuals to file lawsuits and collect damages from the federal government due to their exposure to contaminated water on the Marine Corps base. Qualified claimants had to have served at least 30 days at Camp Lejeune, N.C., between Aug. 1, 1953, and Dec. 31, 1987.

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“Our goal is to make sure veterans and their family members do not settle for less than they deserve and that they have accurate information about the effect a settlement under the Camp Lejeune Justice Act could have on their VA disability benefits (and any other federal benefits),” a dedicated website for American Legion members states.

Bergmann & Moore, founded in 2004 by former VA employees, has been providing American Legion service officer training and legal consultation since 2017.

The dedicated website – <http://www.camplejeunelitigationteam.com/al/> – provides a secure online form for Legionnaires and their family members to explain their circumstances. The firm also has a 24-hour phone number – 800-898-9450 – for those who do not wish to use the web platform.

Bergmann & Moore, according to the MOU, “will work in concert with a mass tort law firm as co-counsel to advocate on the claimant’s behalf” once eligibility under the CLJA is determined.

The stated purpose of the MOU has four prongs:

- Create, implement and execute a service project for veterans interested in participating in the PACT Act/CLJA litigation
- Protect Legion members and their families through comprehensive education, advocacy and assistance in determining whether a claim under the CLJA would be beneficial to them when compared with filing for and receiving benefits from programs administered by VA
- Ensure Legion members receive the maximum benefits allowed under the law while protecting against predatory and/or unscrupulous actors
- Prevent Legion members from accepting/receiving a one-time benefit under the CLJA to the detriment of greater, future VA program eligibility and entitlement

Multiple forms of cancer are among no fewer than 15 health conditions or medical events that may have been caused by contamination. Claimants may be veterans, their families, civilian contractors or estates of those who were harmed.

Veterans, family members and others potentially affected by contaminated water at Camp Lejeune are encouraged to consult American Legion accredited service officers about the lawsuit and or any other matters related to the PACT Act, which extends historic VA disability benefits relief for millions of veterans exposed to toxic contamination, from atomic cleanup sites to burn pits in Iraq and Afghanistan.

[Visit legion.org](http://legion.org) and click on **FIND A SERVICE OFFICER** to reach an accredited advocate, by ZIP code.

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CONGRESS

Both the House and the Senate remain on recess, as the country heads into midterm elections next Tuesday. Early voting is well underway across the country, and polls report breathlessly on close races. At this writing, it appears Republicans will likely gain the majority in the House, and the margin will remain extremely narrow in the Senate (with who will be in control a toss-up).

In the meantime, the federal government stays open under a continuing resolution (CR) that expires mid-December. Democrats in both the House and the Senate want to pass a full FY23 budget during the lame duck session, as well as the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). However, if Republicans will be in the majority come January, they may try to pass another CR in order to have control of writing the full year budget.

THE APPLICATION FOR THE NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL IS NOW OPEN

With the midterm elections a month away, The American Legion is beginning the process of rebuilding its National Legislative Council for the 118th Congress. Interested candidates may submit their applications [at this webpage](#) for their departments' consideration. Legionnaires are encouraged to submit their applications before the Nov. 8 election. Thank you to those who have already applied!

The National Legislative Council (NLC) is a 535-member group designated to serve as direct liaisons to every member of the U.S. Congress. Approved in Resolution 45 by the National Executive Committee in 1975, the council's aim is to "propagate an interest in a furtherance of the legislative goals of The American Legion and to serve as a medium for disseminating information and developing an understanding with our elected representatives." Learn more about the council [in this story](#).

Members of the NLC are relied on to reinforce The American Legion's overall legislative efforts, particularly at times when immediate and personal contact with lawmakers is necessary – typically referred to as "grassroots contact."

They routinely email, write, and/or call lawmakers and their staff regarding veterans legislation. Members should strive to visit the lawmaker's local office at least once per month to discuss issues that will directly impact The American Legion's legislative goals.

Members work to:

- Promote an interest in and a furtherance of The American Legion's legislative goals.
- Serve as a liaison for disseminating information to elected lawmakers and staff.
- Develop and maintain strong working relationships with elected lawmakers and staff.

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- Disseminate information on proposed and adopted veterans legislation to posts and members of the Legion within the congressional district.

Position requirements include:

- Current member of The American Legion
- Experience working with public relations and/or elected officials is a plus.
- Excellent verbal and written communications skills are necessary.
- Comfortable speaking and making presentations to larger groups.
- Ability to use social media.
- Ability to represent The American Legion and veterans to various groups and organizations.
- Ownership of an email account and internet access is required.
- Personal relationship with the member of Congress to whom they are assigned, senior staffers in their office, or willingness and ability to establish relationships with them.

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.

Augustine Galaviz, California

This week, we are excited to recognize Augustine Galaviz from the Department of California for meeting with Rep. Napolitano (D-CA) in Azusa, California. Mr. Galaviz and Rep. Napolitano discussed local veteran homelessness and women veterans with children. They also discussed how veteran service organizations (VSOs), such as The American Legion, can work with local governments to better assist veterans in need.

Thank you, Mr. Galaviz!

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

Congress is out of session next week; there will be no hearings.