



Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary
Department of Maryland
LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM
Chairman Linda Eberhart
November 2025



★ ★ **Be An Advocate - Be Informed - Be Engaged** ★ ★

The **Main Objectives of the Legislative Program** is to improve the lives of our veterans, service members, and their families. This can be done through *Advocacy*. Our efforts can influence lawmakers whose decisions will affect our veterans and their families every day.

There are 6 areas of concern:

- Budget
- Health Care
- Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs
- **Education, Employment and Transition Assistance**
- Military Readiness
- National Security, Foreign Affairs and POW/MIA

The focus of **Education, Employment and Transition Assistance** is to ensure Veterans, succeed after leaving military service, Congress, VA, DODO and DOL must:

- Improve education benefits through modernized online student housing allowances, child care stipends, parity for Guard and Reserve members, and elimination of delimiting dates.
- Enhance outreach and counseling to veterans eligible for the Veteran Readiness and Employment program.
- Ensure parity of VA and DOD education programs with other federal programs.
- Expand small business hiring preference, tax incentives, and entrepreneurship resources for veterans and military spouses.
- Increase funding for HUD-VASH vouchers, grant and diem payments, and pilot programs to combat veteran homelessness.
- Conduct oversight of VA's Transition Assistance Program to ensure compliance with the law, require the inclusion of accredited claims representatives.
- Eliminate red tape preventing effective use of education and employment benefits.

Play a Role in the Process - Engage and help ensure that these priority goals are enacted.

DID YOU KNOW:

Coast Guard Left Unpaid During Government Shutdown: Since the government shutdown began on Oct. 1, members of the U.S. Coast Guard have continued to stand watch without pay. Unlike other uniformed services funded through the Department of Defense, the Coast Guard falls under the Department of Homeland Security, leaving its personnel without pay until Congress restores funding. This is the second time since 2019 that Coast Guard families have been forced to endure the financial strain during a lapse in appropriations that could cause thousands to face uncertainty over how to cover basic expenses such as rent, groceries and child care. Therefore, the VFW strongly supports [H.R. 5401](#), *Pay Our Troops Act of 2026*. This bipartisan legislation would ensure members of all branches of the armed forces continue to receive pay during any future government shutdowns.

H.R.5401 — 119th Congress (2025-2026)

Introduced in the House (09/16/2025)

Pay Our Troops Act of 2026

This bill provides continuing appropriations for military pay for any period during which interim or full-year appropriations for FY2026 are not in effect (i.e., a government shutdown).

Specifically, the bill provides FY2026 continuing appropriations for the pay and allowances of (1) members of the Armed Forces, including reserve components, who perform active service during the period; and (2) civilian personnel and contractors of the Department of Defense (and the Department of Homeland Security in the case of the Coast Guard) who are providing support to such members of the Armed Forces.

If a government shutdown occurs, the bill provides the continuing appropriations until the earlier of (1) the enactment into law of specified appropriations legislation, or (2) January 1, 2027.

Reach out to Legislators. Our service people need to be compensated for defending our country.

Review and share the attached

Guide to Contacting Your Legislators

Have you established your Gratitude Day?

Set up a day for writing Thank you notes to veterans including the QR code or links to VFW Action Corp Weekly Sign-up page or the Priority Goals. This will help them to feel appreciated, and they will have a way to engage in ongoing legislative efforts. Help them to help themselves.

This event is part of the Legislative Program Awards for 25-26

There are currently over 70 bills benefiting our veterans in Congress.

Information is all found in Action Corp Weekly

<https://votervoice.net/VFW/Directory>

Find your legislator.

Focus on a few, reach out to your Congress Person and let them know what we need for our Veterans.

Sometimes our voice is all the veteran has.

Don't forget to include your Post # in the email Subject Line and your return address on mailed reports for an extra point.

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Use this QR Code to sign up for Action Corp Weekly!

VFW Auxiliary Legislative Program

A Guide to Contacting Your Legislators

Kathy Voss, 2018-2019 National Legislative Ambassador



As a North Carolina legislative staffer, I have learned a few things about citizen lobbying. Keep the following tips in mind when communicating with your senator or representative.

FINDING YOUR LEGISLATOR

- **Where to look up your Senator or Representative:** Go on the internet and type in the following address: <http://congresslookup.com/>. Once you find your representative and/or senator, write down the physical address of their district office (which will be in your state), the email address, telephone number and fax (if you wish) of the district office and the Washington, D.C. office. Use this contact information to communicate with your legislators. Be sure to check this site after each election. Even if the legislator is re-elected, the office address may have changed.

VISITING YOUR LEGISLATOR

- **Make an appointment:** Legislative offices are extremely busy with many demands for appointments and often chaotic committee meeting schedules, along with sessions where legislation is debated and voted upon. If a staffer is unable to schedule a meeting with the legislator personally, ask to meet with a policy staff member or legislative assistant who will relay your issue and/or concern. If you are able to schedule a meeting with the legislator personally, keep in mind that all such meetings are typically tentative and subject to cancellation should a meeting or session be called that requires the legislator's attendance. Should this happen to you, keep your composure and ask to meet with an available staffer.
- **Be on time and dress appropriately:** Time is a valuable commodity in a legislative office. Please be sure to arrive on time, or even a few minutes early, for your appointment. This will allow you to have the best opportunity to meet for the maximum amount of time. There is no need for professional or Sunday best dress, however business casual attire will show respect for the office and make a positive impression on behalf of the VFW Auxiliary organization.
- **Be respectful to staff:** Staffers often make the decisions as to whom the legislator will meet. Make a friend of the "gatekeeper" and your experience, regardless of whom you may meet, will be much more positive. Never belittle the legislator to their staff!
- **Be prepared:** Make your presentation brief and be as clear and concise as possible. Write down talking points, including specific details you would like to relay, and provide them along with any materials to the legislator or his/her staff after the meeting.
- **Focus on the issue:** Keep your comments focused and specific. These meetings are likely to be brief, so follow your talking points. Should you forget to mention something or follow up is needed, send an email or letter after the meeting.
- **Send a thank you note:** Thank the legislator and his/her staff for arranging and taking the time to meet with you to discuss your concerns. This goes a long way in reinforcing a positive impression of you and our organization with the legislator and his/her staff! Do this as soon as possible after your meeting.

WRITING OR CALLING YOUR LEGISLATOR

- **Be respectful:** Thank the legislator for serving and ask for their help in addressing your concern. Be mindful that often you will not be able to speak to the legislator when calling their office, instead you will be speaking with a staff member who will relay your issue and/or concern.
- **Email is effective:** Email has increased public understanding of what happens in Washington D.C., made members of Congress more responsive to their constituents, and influences the decisions of members of Congress.
- **Personalize your messages:** Staffers pay more attention to personalized messages that don't look like they have been cut and pasted from a letter. It's best to include one or two sentences in a message about yourself, the neighborhood you live in, and the types of organizations, associations, etc., you belong to in the community.
- **Focus on one issue:** Keep your phone calls, letters or emails short and focused on one issue. Personal stories of how you or those you know are affected by government policies add to the effectiveness of your communications. Messages that attempt to persuade, rather than demand, are more likely to be heard. Never belittle the legislator you are addressing!
- **Be specific:** Communications that request a specific action (including a bill number, if available) often have more impact than those that express only a generalized concern. Asking your senators and representatives to "support our veterans" is not as effective as writing to say "Don't vote for the new sequestering legislation, as it will limit access to services for our veterans."

PLANNING AND EXECUTING A PETITION

- **Be accurate and brief:** Thank the legislator for serving and ask for their help in addressing your concern. Be sure to include the bill number and a brief description of the bill or a brief summary of your issue.
- **Identify yourself:** Be certain to identify the organization as the organizer of the petition, especially if you are asking non-members to sign on.
- **Get the right information:** Place all of your descriptive and identifying information at the top of the page and below place three lines across on each row. The first line is for the person to sign their name, second line is for them to print their name and the third line is for their ZIP code.
- **Before You Send It:** Gather all of the pages together and make as many copies as you wish to send, keeping one copy for your file. Staple or secure with a binder clip and place in a large envelope that has been addressed appropriately.
- **The Post Office:** Make sure you have adequate postage by asking the postal clerk to weigh the packet for you. This will ensure proper delivery to the intended recipient.

Legislators want to hear from their constituents. By presenting thoughtful, focused communications you can gain credibility with the member and his/her office staff, which improves your lobbying outcome.

The most important part of communicating with your legislator is to "Just do it!" The VFW and VFW Auxiliary have an incredibly strong presence nationwide as a veterans' service organization and every letter, email, phone call, fax, visit or petition strengthens our voice as we continually fight for services and benefits for our veterans.