



Southern Division

Legislative Bulletin

April 2021

April is known for beautiful spring weather and the start of warmer weather. It has been said that April is a time to refresh and renew. What a great opportunity to refresh and renew your support in the American Legion Auxiliary through engagement in the legislative program. In local Congressional Districts and in Washington, D.C., American Legion Auxiliary members work to keep veterans' issues in front of legislators, strengthening our mission to serve veterans, servicemembers and their families.

During this past year, the legislative program never faltered in our continued support of veteran issues. We simply adjusted our focus to include issues surrounding Covid 19 and the pandemic. Many pandemic related resolutions were introduced.

In March of this year, President Biden signed into law H.R. 1276, *Strengthening and Amplifying Vaccination Efforts to Locally Immunize All Veterans and Every Spouse (SAVE LIVES) Act*. The law allows VA to provide a COVID-19 vaccine to all veterans, their spouses, caregivers, and Civilian Health and Medical Program recipients regardless of their eligibility for VA health care. Veterans who are already using VA health care will have priority, however, all veterans, their spouses and caregivers are now eligible to receive coronavirus vaccines through the Department of Veterans Affairs.

VA officials said after the signing that they will start running pilot programs in coming weeks at some medical centers to work through distribution of the vaccine to the wider veterans community, in anticipation of getting millions of additional doses in coming months.

In a statement, VA Secretary Denis McDonough said the changes will increase the number of individuals eligible for vaccines through VA from about 9 million to more than 33 million.

“Meeting the task of vaccinating this expanded population will be a tremendous undertaking for the VA and will require a significant increase in our allocation of vaccine supply, but I am confident that VA’s workforce is up to the task,” he said.

Under previous rules, department medical centers were permitted to administer vaccines only to veterans already eligible for VA health care services, and for certain caregivers registered in VA support programs.

But the new legislation, which passed Congress without objection, dramatically expands that pool. It includes:

- All veterans living in the United States;
- Veterans living overseas enrolled in the Foreign Medical Program;
- Those veterans’ spouses;
- Veteran caregivers enrolled in either the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers or the Program of General Caregiver Support Services;
- Veteran caregivers enrolled in certain geriatrics and extended Care Programs, such as Veteran Directed Care and VA’s Medical Foster Home Program;
- and Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (CHAMPVA) recipients.

We have adapted to many new and uncharted paths in the past year but one constant remained - As stated by The American Legion National Commander Bill Oxford: “...The American Legion Family did not lose focus on the mission at hand, nor did we lose faith in our ability to strengthen America at a time of great uncertainty and stress.”

Take time to listen to the Commanders' testimony before the House and Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs this past month and vow to yourself to refresh and renew your support of the legislative program for our veteran's, service members, and their families. The testimony can be viewed at <https://www.legion.org/commander/251958/oxford-pandemic-highlights-legions-continued-mission-amplifies-congressional-goals>

As always, remember to take advantage of the free resources available at www.legion.org/legislative and join us on our ALA Legislative Facebook page for daily posts, videos, and our monthly Legislative Moments with special guest speakers.

*For God and Country,
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