

## ALA NC Legislative News

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**The purpose of this newsletter is to encourage and empower members to be more knowledgeable to take action on The American Legion's legislative priorities.**

**Happy Valentine's Day! I am looking forward to seeing all of you at Mid-Winter.**

**Thank you to those who have sent me information on how your unit has been working the Legislative program this year. Those of you who have not sent a report yet, please do so.**

**See Attachment for questions on the legislative program.**

### **American Legion legislative victories and priorities for 2022**

American Legion legislative victories for the first session of the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress, legislative priorities for the second session. Some of the victories that were won in the first session of the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress are:

- 1. The Global War on Terrorism Memorial** to be built in a prominent location on the National Mall. In honor of the longest war in U.S. history
- 2. The Protecting Moms Who Served Act** aims to improve maternal health care for veterans, to include a \$15 million investment from the VA to upgrade maternity care for women veterans
- 3. The Sgt. Ketchum Rural Veterans' Mental Health Act** will expand access to mental health care for rural veterans. The American Legion has worked with VA to introduce a pilot program that provides telehealth sites in American Legion posts to serve rural areas, known as Project ATLAS
- 4. The American Rescue Plan**, which closes the 90/10 loophole. This rule mandated for-profit schools to obtain at least 10 percent of their revenue from sources other than Title IV education funds, which are the primary source of student aid.

### **Some of the Bills being Tracked by the American Legion**

1. – **H.R. 1182, Veteran Deportation Prevention and Reform Act** and Senate bill **Naturalization at Training Sites Act of 2021**
2. – **H.R. 3967, Honoring Our PACT Act** and **S. 3003, True COST of War**. to ensure that those veterans during the Global War on Terrorism and the Gulf War.
3. who were exposed to toxic airborne hazards are taken care of in a more proactive manner than we did with Agent Orange,”

4. **S.1198, Solid Start Act** will expand the VA Solid Start Program. Under this program, the VA is required to reach out three times in the first year that a servicemember is separated from the military.
5. – **S.544, Buddy Check** bill will require the Department of Veterans Affairs to establish a “Buddy Check Week This bill should be on the President’s desk by the end of February.
6. – **H.R. 5562 and S. 1040** bills will expand eligibility for hospital care, medical services, and nursing home care from the VA to include veterans of World War II.
7. – **H.R. 4794 and S. 2533, Making Advances in Mammography and Medical Options (MAMMO) for Veterans Act** would require VA to improve breast imaging services to veterans that includes a three-year pilot program to provide tele-mammography services for veterans who live in states where VA does not offer breast imaging services.
8. – **S. 2172, Building Solutions for Veterans Experiencing Homelessness Act** will “cut the red tape” on grants provided by VA for organizations assisting veterans experiencing homelessness,

We can help the American Legion get these bills passed. The American Legion’s Legislative Division uses **VoterVoice** as a grassroots advocacy platform for connecting us to our members of Congress. Why Congress listens to us, The American Legion Family is strong in numbers. We are voters who represent the voice of our veterans.

**Sign Up for action Alerts at:** <https://votervoicenet.com/AmericanLegion/home> On this page you can choose which Legislation is most important. This is the easiest way to reach your congressman. It takes less than 5 minutes. Please I urge you to write letters on behalf of our veterans.

***For more information see the attached sheet that includes the current bills that the American Legion is tracking.***

### **National Guard and Reserves Have A Win**

**G.I. BILL PARITY ACT** This week, the House overwhelmingly passed the Guard and Reserve GI Bill Parity Act, with a 287 to 133 vote. This legislation broadens the kinds of service for which members of the reserve components can earn GI Bill educational benefits. The increased use of these service members in the pandemic response over the past two years has highlighted the disparities and complexities in current law. National Guard and reserve troops would see all federal missions and some training days count towards their eligibility for GI Bill benefits under legislation advanced by the House on Wednesday. The move will still need to be approved by the Senate before it can become law. Sixty-eight Republicans sided with all of the House Democrats in advancing the measure. Senate leaders have not announced any timeline for when the measure might be considered in their chamber.

“**VETERANS LEGISLATION** House Veterans Affairs Committee (HVAC) chair Rep. Takano (D-CA) and ranking member Rep. Bost (R-IL) introduced HR 6411, the Supporting the

Resilience of Our Nation's **Great Veterans Act, also known as the STRONG Act**. The legislation, based on 22 other bills, addresses a wide range of issues within the VA, including:

- o Expand eligibility for student veterans at Vet Centers; o Improve culturally competent suicide prevention at VA medical centers for Native veterans.

- o Increase mental health staffing and training at Vet Centers and VA medical facilities, including expanded use of peer support programs.

- o Improve the Veterans Crisis Line.

The bill would also expand collection of data on veterans' use of inpatient mental health and substance use treatment. This information will hopefully guide the VA in expanding its programs in these areas. On Tuesday, VA Secretary McDonough called upon the committee to act on the VA Nurse and Physician Assistant RAISE Act, which would increase salary limitations for these clinicians. The committee's planned markup of both bills was postponed Thursday morning, as Takano brought another bill, HR 4673, the Ensuring Veterans' Smooth Transition (EVEST) Act, to the House floor. The EVEST Act would automatically enroll service members in the VA as they leave the military, with the ability to opt-out. The hope is that simplifying enrollment in the VA will allow more new veterans to get the help they need faster. The first year after leaving the military is a period of especially high risk for suicide. The majority of veterans who die from suicide were not in VA care. Studies have shown that receiving VA care helps protect a veteran from suicide. In his statement on the floor, Takano stressed that this bill will smooth the transition between Department of Defense (DoD) and VA care. "We shouldn't be trying to hide VA care from those who've earned it," he proclaimed. HVAC ranking member Bost led opposition to the EVEST Act, noting that there are already a number of ways for new veterans to learn about and connect with the VA. This move, he worries, will swamp the Department and become overwhelming. The bill now moves to the Senate, where no timeline has been set for consideration."

### **Veterans & Service Members More Likely To Be Hit By Scams** **Rebecca Higgins**

According to a December 29, 2021, article from the Military Officers' Association of America (MOAA) our veterans and service members are getting hit with scam and fraud calls/texts/social media posts much more often than their civilian counter parts. This could be because they are 40% more likely to fall for these scams! This comes from a November 2021 survey produced by AARP Research.

Key takeaways:

- 67% of military/veteran survey respondents reported receiving a tech-support scam offer, compared to 58% of civilians.
- 25% of military/veteran respondents reported falling victim to an IRS imposter scam, compared to just 13% of civilians.
- 36% of military/veteran respondents reported losing money as part of a grandparent imposter scam, compared to 17% of civilians.

1 in 3 service members/veterans who responded to the survey reported losing money in service-connected scams. These include fraudulent promises of VA benefit buyouts, paying to obtain or change personnel records, and donations to fake veteran charities.

Younger veterans are targeted for employment scams whereas older veterans may be targeted for the “Grandchild in Jail” scam. See this YouTube video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pY8OekuzOgs> It is only just over a minute long, but is packed with action and teaches a valuable lesson.

Remember these tips straight from MOAA:

Never speak to anyone you do not know. If called, hang up. If emailed, delete. If they come to your door, close the door. They are trained to keep you speaking and the longer they spend with you, the more convincing they will sound.

Never share any personal information with anyone. The scammers will say or do anything to make you think their “need to know” is legit. You will be convinced you need to tell them information.

No legitimate organization, especially government agencies, will call you, email you, or come to your door. No real organization expects payment up front, especially in some shady way like asking for a cashier check or gift cards.

Do not believe the email return address or the caller ID on your phone. Their technology can make it look like the contact is from someone you know.

Never click on a link or attachment in an email and do not believe the web page you are sent to. Their technology is so advanced they recreate web pages that look real, mimicking banks, government agencies, etc.

No one is coming to arrest you, garnish your money, or threaten you. That is not how real legitimate organizations work.

MOAA has an excellent 3 part overview of scams with Part One linked here:

<https://www.moaa.org/content/publications-and-media/news-articles/2020-news-articles/dont-be-scammed-%E2%80%94-part-1-be-alert/> The other two parts are found on that page.

Further Resources: [FightCybercrime.org/milvet-resources/](https://fightcybercrime.org/milvet-resources/) And [ScamSpotter.org](https://scamspotter.org)

**SCAMMERS WILL PROBABLY STEAL OVER THREE BILLION DOLLARS THIS YEAR.  
DON'T LET ANY OF THIS MONEY BE YOURS!!!**

**Something to watch for**  
**Rebecca Higgins**

There is a military advocacy group working to reform the process to support veterans' claims to service-connected disabilities for toxic exposures such as burn pits, oil well fires, and covid. This is based on what was seen with Agent Orange claims. Right now, the current practice is to make the veteran prove they were exposed. This can delay treatment and payment. And, if the ill veteran dies during the process the spouse does not receive Dependency and Indemnity Compensation. The process takes time to conclude, and problems sometimes do not show up until decades after exposure.

**What this group wants to do at the national level:**

- Pursue enactment of legislation that concedes veterans serving in the Middle East and Southeast Asia were exposed to hazardous substances.
- Increase transparency and tracking around toxic substance use and exposure.
- Establish an advisory committee to recommend research on emerging conditions.
- Assess the impact of the pandemic on the health of service members deployed to assist the whole-of-government response.

As of now they are gathering information from veterans on-line and compiling information. They then will pursue this as part of their 2022 Agenda for Congress. See MOAA.org under the advocacy tab.

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## REMINDERS

Subscribe to the Legion's Legislative Action Alerts at [www.capwiz.com/legion/mlm/signup](http://www.capwiz.com/legion/mlm/signup) to subscribe.

Join the National Legislative Facebook page  
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Join the newly created Department Legislative Facebook page NC ALA **Legislative Facebook group**

Download a copy of the **ALA Legislative Advocacy Guide** from **Visit the Legion's legislative website**, [www.legion.org/legislative](http://www.legion.org/legislative) to keep current on legislative priorities. The site also contains the Legion's legislative priority sheets and point papers, available for download. The priority/drop sheets outline the Legion's priorities, and you can "drop" these in your elected official's office. The point papers provide more information on the issue and the Legion's position.

Actively post The American Legion's legislative priorities on social media.

Identify your U.S. representative and two U.S. senators and build a relationship and rapport with these individuals and/or members of their staff.

Subscribe to e-newsletters of your elected officials to monitor what they consider to be their priorities and to make sure the veteran/military and national security issues are among them. Follow them on social media as well.

## For Information on the Municipalities elections for North Carolina

<https://www.ncsbe.gov/voting/upcoming-election> **Voting in local government elections is extremely important.**

**Municipalities control our local tax rates, (property taxes) make decisions about development, policing, trash services and other issues that affect our daily lives Most municipalities in NC conduct election in odd-numbered years. On this website you will find a tab "voting tool kit" that will show you county by county and what election will occur this year and dates for the elections.**

**\*Check out the tab for VOTE IN HONOR OF A VETERAN. You can receive a personalized pin. When you order your pin take a picture of you wearing your pin and post it on the Department Legislative Facebook page.**



**Check out the North Carolina General Assembly page <https://ncleg.gov/> Near the bottom of the page click on find your Legislator, enter your address and you will find your North Carolina senators**

**and Representatives to the General Assembly. Click on their name and you**

**On July 16<sup>th</sup> National Atomic Day will be observed. Atomic Veterans participated in nuclear tests between 1945 and 1962.**

