



ALA NC Legislative News

May 2022

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Don't Forget to VOTE May 17th

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.

It has been an honor to serve as your NC Legislative Chair this year. My Goal was to keep you informed on current Legislation support by the American Legion. I hope Rebecca and I have shared some new learning tools and provided some education about the bills that the American Legion supports. In your toolbox you now have ways to easily contact your senators and representatives, so your voice is heard. (votervoice.net. and many other websites including: www.capwiz.com/legion/mlm/signup to subscribe. where you can subscribe to Legion Alerts and North Carolina government websites: <https://www.ncsbe.gov/voting/upcoming-election>)

It has been fun to attend Meeting the Candidate Events and to have the opportunity to speak at a few events and share legislative information. This year has been exciting even though we did not have a big presidential election, the local municipal elections that were held in the fall and the early elections in May Primaries have been exciting in my hometown.

I was blessed with a great committee member Rebecca Higgins. She did a great job providing us with information on many state issues concerning our veterans. As always, thank you for the opportunity to serve you and our veterans. Julie

Important Announcement from the American Legion

The American Legion sent out an announcement to alert the NLC members and Legislative Action Center subscribers to call on their Senators to pass **H.R. 3967, the Honoring our PACT Act**. This campaign will be the top legislative priority of The American Legion over the next few months. The Legion Family is encouraged to share this information and write you senators and Representatives in support of The Honoring our PACT Act. Please use [Votervoicenet](https://www.votervoicenet.com) To reach your senators and representatives on this issue. It takes less than 5 minutes.

Salisbury VA Closing?

Julie Smith

In my hometown of Salisbury there is much chatter about the possibility of the Salisbury VAMC closing or at least closing many of the departments, that the Salisbury VA currently offers. I know many of you support the Salisbury VA, so I wanted to share some information with you. The following information is from the Salisbury Post, March 20,2022.

“Changes have been recommended for the Salisbury VA by a federal market assessment of Veterans Affairs. They have conducted assessments across the country. The Mission Act of 2018, that former President Trump signed, aimed to expand veterans’ access to health care by seeking community care if no VA in the area provide services needed.

The Salisbury VA opened in 1953. The Salisbury VA is headquarters to satellites sites at Kernersville and 2 in charlotte. “The report showed that the Salisbury VA showed \$163 million in deficiencies with operations and maintenance cost of \$11 million. The recommendations for the Salisbury VA are intended to maintain inpatient mental health and community living center services while modernizing and expanding residential treatment programs services.” A recommendation is to establish a strategic collaboration for inpatient medical care emergency department services, meaning such services would be discontinued in at the Salisbury site. These services would be handled by a charlotte facility. This would relocate low-volume programs from the Salisbury VAMC to a strategic collaboration with the academic affiliate and their partner hospital. This recommendation is based on the projected decrease in total inpatient medical and surgical care demand at the Salisbury VAMC. Another recommendation is to relocate the outpatient surgical service to Kernersville and Charlotte. If these changes are approved, it could take years to implement.” Theses changes could cause hardship on our veterans who would have to travel to Charlotte or Kernersville to receive services that they are currently receiving in Salisbury.” The changes would also affect the economy of Salisbury/Rowan due to job loss. I urge you to contact Senator Burr and Tom Tills (their contact information is at the bottom of the Newsletter) Thank you.

The big news for May 2022: The Primaries being held on May 17th!

Rebecca Higgins

The big news for May 2022, the Primaries being held on May 17th! These elections will determine the candidates that you see this fall on the ballots for office. So, of course, it is very important to start picking the best person for each office now. Sample ballots are available for viewing at your local Board of Election website or at: <https://www.ncsbe.gov/>. There are a wide variety of elections on the ballots including some from 2021 in areas that moved their elections due to redistricting.

For Libertarians there are no contested races, so there will be no Libertarians on the ballots until the fall when the candidates will appear as their party's nominee.

If no candidate wins 30% of the vote there is a run-off date set for July 26th. You can check back on the website above or your local Board of Elections to see if there is a run-off for your area.

One stop early voting will begin on April 28th and continue until May 14th, again check your local Board of Election website or local paper for information on locations.

Here is a direct link to a local voter tool on the NCBOE website:

<https://www.ncsbe.gov/voting/upcoming-election/local-voter-tool>

If you have questions about redistricting in your area, maps are available here:

<https://www.ncsbe.gov/results-data/voting-maps-redistricting>

OF NOTE: Our North Carolina State Board of Elections has won national recognition with an award for a program to foster better relations between the State Board and the 100 County Boards across NC. This award was given by the US Election Assistance Commission in April for “Outstanding Innovations in Elections (Large Jurisdictions) for the “HUBS” program. From the Press Release, “HUBS, which stands for “Helping Us Be Successful,” is a program establishing working groups of county and state elections staff who are experts in various elections topics. These groups serve as literal “hubs” for gathering and sharing information on subject areas and working toward solutions to address the needs of voters, candidates, and elections officials. The program includes 13 HUBS in important areas such as Voter Registration, Voting Systems, Absentee Voting, In-Person Voting, and Campaign Finance. Each HUB meets regularly online.”

The program is touted for giving a place for County Directions to give important feedback to the State on how to make the elections process better for all.

ALSO: As of April 16th, there are 7,275,577 registered voters in North Carolina!

From the American Legion Legislative Updates

“AMERICAN LEGION CONDEMNS FOR-PROFIT CLAIMS COMPANIES THAT PREY ON VETERANS American Legion Deputy Director for Benefits and Claims Services Marty Callaghan testified April 27 at a congressional hearing focused on ensuring quality representation during the process of filing a claim for veterans’ benefits. You can watch the full hearing here. Initiating a claim for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits can feel daunting and overwhelming. The American Legion provides experienced personnel to assist veterans with their claims free of charge. VA-accredited attorneys and agents provide vital services and work in close coordination with The American Legion and other veterans service organizations to ensure veterans have qualified representation for more complex cases. They provide critical services to veterans, including assistance in obtaining key information to prevail in a claim or appeal.

Their legal skills and training enable them to provide the “appropriate legal analysis for written arguments, with current citations to recent precedent-setting court opinions, to assist veterans in navigating VA’s complex and evolving claims and appeals system,” according to written testimony from The American Legion. Veterans are facing a serious and growing threat to the claims process as unaccredited, for-profit claims companies that charge for their services prey on veterans, Callaghan told the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs (HVAC) Subcommittees on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs and Oversight and Investigations. “These companies often charge veterans five or six times the amount of whatever future increase in monthly benefits they receive — violating the intent of federal regulation, which prohibits the payment of fees based on future benefits compensation,” he said. Because these companies are not accredited by VA, their activities cannot be monitored by VA’s Office of General Counsel. They do not work in the best interests of our veterans, said Callaghan. “In their contractual language, some of these companies carefully limit their own responsibilities, making it clear they are not responsible for the actual filing of VA claims,” he said. “They avoid responsibilities that may require any substantial effort. They do not like to involve themselves with pending claims because, as one contract stated, pending claims add a ‘substantial additional workload ... these cases are typically a mess and extremely time consuming and we prefer to avoid them at all cost.’” This, says Callaghan, makes it overwhelmingly clear these unaccredited companies want to make as much money as they can, while doing as little work as possible without considering the veterans. “Providing claims assistance should not be about the money,” Callaghan told lawmakers. “It should be about service to veterans and their families. The American Legion has been assisting the veterans’ community for more than a century, and we are thoroughly invested in that community. Our dedication goes far beyond filling out some paperwork.”

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS’ AFFAIRS ADVANCES 17 BIPARTISAN BILLS TO SUPPORT VETERANS

- H.R. 7393 – The Improving VA Workforce through Minority Serving Institutions Act of 2022
- H.R. 6961, as amended – The Dignity for MST Survivors Act
- A.N.S. offered by Rep. Takano (D-CA) to H.R. 2724, as amended – VA Peer Support Enhancement for MST Survivors Act

- H.R. 6052 – Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General Training Act of 2021
 - A.N.S. offered by Rep. Pappas (D-NH) to H.R. 7277 – Improving Oversight of VA Community Care Providers Act of 2022
 - H.R. 2428 – Strengthening Oversight for Veterans Act of 2021
 - H.R. 7369 – Veteran Eligibility for Necessities To Undertake Rewarding Entrepreneurship (VENTURE) Act
 - A.N.S. offered by Rep. Takano (D-CA) to H.R. 6376, as amended – Student Veteran Work Study Modernization Act National Legislative Division Weekly April 8, 2022
 - H.R. 7375 – To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to update the payment system of the Department of Veterans Affairs to allow for electronic fund transfer of educational assistance, administered by the Secretary, to a foreign institution of higher education
 - H.R. 5738, as amended – Lactation Spaces for Veteran Moms Act
 - H.R. 7335 – Improving Military Sexual Trauma (MST) Claims Coordination Act
 - H.R. 2326 – Veterans Cyber Risk Awareness Act
 - H.R. 7158 – Long-Term Care Veterans Choice Act
 - H.R. 5754 – Patient Advocate Tracker Act
 - H.R. 6064 – To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to seek to enter into an agreement with the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine for a review of examinations, furnished by the Secretary, to individuals who submit claims to the Secretary for compensation under chapter 11 of title 38, United States Code, for mental and physical conditions linked to MS
- A.N.S. offered by Rep. Bost (R-IL) to H.R. 7153 – Department of Veterans Affairs Principles of Benefits Automation Act
- A.N.S. offered by Rep. Bost (R-IL) to H.R. 6604 – VETS Credit Act

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REMINDERS

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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 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 elections 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 can see their contact information