



ALA NC Legislative News

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Chairman: Julie Smith

Juliesmith1960@gmail.com

704-647-1193

Committee Member: Rebecca Higgins

RebeccaB.Higgins@gmail.com

704-419-4512

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.

So, What is Up with Flag Protection Amendment Julie Smith

Thirty-two years ago (1989) the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that flag desecration was protected speech, by the 1st amendment (Texas v. Johnson 491 U.S. 397) The American Legion has been at the forefront to urge Congress to approve an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would allow congress to prohibit the physical desecration of the U.S. Flag. The proposed amendment has passed the House of Representatives six times but fell slightly short of the required two-thirds votes needed in the Senate. The proposed amendment is a single sentence: "The Congress shall have power to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag of the United States."

The American Legion urges Congress to pass the Flag Code Modernization Act of 2021 to amend the U.S. Flag Code to codify multiple common patriotic customs and practices as described in The American Legion Resolution No. 19: Flag Code Amendment.

Resolution No. 19, 2016. The Flag amendment has never been so important. Patriotism needs to be revived in our nation among the people. Children need to know and value what our Flag means to the men and women who have fought and those that have given the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom. It we allow flag desecration to be a sign of free speech and protest then we are teaching our children disrespect and contempt for our country and for those who have fought for our freedom.

Activities Letter Writing Party

Here is an activity that your unit can do to support the Legislative program and our veterans. As members of the ALA, we advocate for better care of our veterans in our communities and country. Your unit can host a letter-writing campaign to local, state, and federal officials by hosting a letter writing party at your unit. Invite the Legion Family members, friends, family, and members of other civic organizations to the party. Make sure you explain why the veterans' issues are important. Determine which veterans' issues are top priority in your community, state,

or the nation. You can find outlined issues that the American Legion has identified as the most important facing veterans at www.capwiz.com/legion/mlm/signup. Set up a letter writing station with electronic form letters and sample letters for members to copy. Ask your local library or school if your group can use their computer lab. Provide envelopes, stamps, and pens so letters can be signed, sealed and mailed that day. Make your decorated ALA letter box for members to drop their letters in. Don't forget to take a picture and post it on the Department Legislative Facebook page. You may get some new ALA members also. Don't forget to have fun and provide snacks.

Newsletter info Oct 2021

Municipal Elections

Rebecca Higgins

The One-stop early voting period for the November municipal elections runs from October 14th to October 30th, 2021. To check places and times for early voting check this web site: <https://www.ncsbe.gov/voting/vote-early-person#sites>. On that same page you may also view you sample ballot. You do have to enter your voter information to do that because there are about 2,000 different ballot styles in North Carolina for this election. Curbside voting and By-mail Absentee voting is also available.

Same day registration for voting is available during the early voting period. If you need to update your registration you should contact your local Board of Elections or check this link: <https://www.ncsbe.gov/registering/updating-registration> .

Did you know?

Rebecca Higgins

North Carolina has a Department of Military and Veterans Affairs? <https://www.milvets.nc.gov/> North Carolina is 7th in the nation with 730,357 Veterans and 6th in the nation with 97, 585 military retirees. We also have 96,531 Active-Duty military and 21,917 Reserve and National Guard troops. This web site was set up to help answer questions and provide resources for our veterans and current military. This is a very interesting site to just surf around on to see what is going on the in the NC military community. There is a Resource Guide along with Press Releases, FAQs, events, and services offered.

This site also has information about the NC Military Affairs Commission that was established in 2013. This takes special interest in the areas around military installations as well as quality of life issues. Check out as well the NC Hall of Firsts that they are looking to establish. That seems like a very worthwhile endeavor.

National Legislative Division Weekly

VSOs RALLY TO KEEP THE TROOPS TO TEACHERS PROGRAM ALIVE

(Courtesy of The American Legion Media & Communications Division) The American Legion is one of four veterans service organizations (VSOs) that joined together to stress the value of the Troops to Teachers program and to urge Congress to reauthorize funding for the program in the Fiscal Year 2022 National Defense Reauthorization Act (NDAA).

“We believe the value of Troops to Teachers cannot be understated,” the VSOs wrote in a joint letter to leadership in the House Committee on Armed Services. “It provides employment assistance to transitioning veterans, which aids in lowering veteran unemployment; it alleviates nationwide teaching shortages, which improves education quality; and it increases access and representation among traditionally less-represented groups to teaching careers.”

The American Legion was joined by the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Student Veterans of America and Disabled American Veterans.

Established in 1993, Troops to Teachers was designed to assist transitioning servicemembers and veterans to begin careers as educators in K-12 public, charter, and Bureau of Indian Affairs schools. The Department of Defense reported that the program placed over 21,000 veteran teachers in classrooms since its inception. Additionally, the program provides counseling and referral services to help participants meet education and licensing requirements, as well as helps them secure a teaching position. Since 1993, more than 100,000 veterans have successfully transitioned to a career in education.

The program was defunded with little notice to servicemembers as part of the Defense-Wide Review when the Department of Defense opted to realign program resources to higher priority programs more closely aligned to the National Defense Strategy. The American Legion stands firm with the other VSOs that this is unacceptable.

“Allowing the Troops for Teachers program to sunset would go against America’s critical need to support our children’s education,” they wrote. National Legislative Division Weekly October 1, 2021 The version of the NDAA recently passed by the House of Representatives did not include funding for Troops to Teachers, however the Senate version of the bill does. Negotiations on the FY2022 NDAA are expected to continue through December.

American Legion Resolution No. 21: Support State and National Funding for Troops to Teachers Program resolves The American Legion’s support for renewing funding for the Troops to Teachers program at both state and national levels.

“We implore you to champion this established program and stand with veterans by protecting Troops to Teachers from termination,” the VSOs concluded.

KEY LEGISLATION UPDATES

S. 544: Buddy Check Week Act of 2021

Bill Status: Referred to Veterans Affairs Committee 6/23/21

Co-Sponsors: 19

Staff Notes: Committee staff have sent out emails indicating they wish to hotline line it soon which will allow it to move to the Senate Floor for a vote without having to go through a committee markup. Legislative staff is communicating with HVAC staff to express our desire to ensure S.544 is included in a 9/22/2021 HVAC Suicide Prevention Hearing.

S. 1040: VA Access for WWII Veterans

Bill Status: Committee on Veterans' Affairs ordered to be reported without amendment favorably 7/28/2021

Co-Sponsors: 10

Staff Notes: On June 23 it was the subject of a SVAC Full Committee Hearing where it received VA support. On July 28 it was ordered to be reported favorably without amendment during an SVAC Full Committee Markup - It is now awaiting scheduling for a vote on the Senate Floor.

H.R. 3967: Honoring our PACT Act of 2021

Bill Status: Reported out 14-11 of House Veterans Affairs Committee 6/24/21

Co-Sponsors: 38

Staff Notes: The House Veterans Affairs Committee marked up the Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act of 2021 and the bill was reported out to the full House. This legislation will put toxic-exposed veterans into Priority Group 6 for obtaining VA health care services. It will also streamline the VA's review process for establishing toxic exposure presumptions. The government will concede veterans were exposed to airborne hazards and burn pits based on locations and dates of service, rather than requiring the veteran to prove physical exposure. The VA would be required to provide specialized medical exams and opinions for certain veterans with toxic exposure disability claims.

H.R. 1836: Guard and Reserve GI Bill Parity Act of 2021

Bill Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity.

Staff Notes: House Committee staff have shared concerns that the legislation will be bottlenecked by the Senate debate over the Honoring our PACT Act costs. Senate Committee confirmed this hold up and shared that it did not have any offsets identified to cover the potentially \$7 billion dollar costs of the bill. NLD staff planning further discussions are planned with the Committees and other veterans' groups.

REMINDERS

What Can You do?

Subscribe to the Legion's Legislative Action Alerts at www.capwiz.com/legion/mlm/signup to subscribe.

Join the National Legislative Facebook page • ALA National Headquarters: www.facebook.com/ALAforVeterans The national Legislative Committee Facebook group, search

"ALA National Legislative Group Page" 4.

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

Download a copy of the **ALA Legislative Advocacy Guide** from www.ALAforVeterans.org.

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 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 can see their contact information