



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.

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.

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

Information for Fall Voting: Rebecca Higgins

There will be some 2021 Municipal Elections this fall. Right now, candidates are working to meet the local filing deadlines. This is the state-wide website where you can look up to see what is going on in your area or across the state: <https://www.ncsbe.gov/>

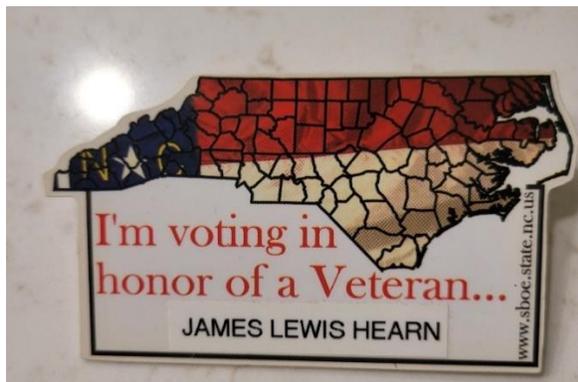
There are two dates in NC when municipal elections will be held. Municipal elections are for local government offices such as mayor and councilpersons. Sometimes there are referendums to be voted on as well. The dates are:

Tuesday October 5th and Tuesday November 2nd.

On the NC State Board of Elections web site under the voting tab you may scroll down to “upcoming elections”. Click on that and then scroll down to a big maroon box that says “202 Municipal Voter Tool”. Click on that and there is a list by county of all the upcoming elections.

You can also search on the internet for your county’s Board of Election for the latest information.

North Carolina has over 7,100,000 registered voters. There is a lot of interesting information that you can find just surfing around on the page. One think I ran into was this link to order a free pin honoring a veteran when you go to vote: <https://www.ncsbe.gov/veteran-pin> This link takes you directly to the page that shows the pin and gives you the way to order the pin through the “Vote To Honor A Veteran Program”. ***Check out the tab for VOTE IN HONOR OF A VETERAN. When you order your pin take a picture of you wearing your pin and post it on the Department Legislative Facebook page**



This is Julie’s veteran

Support Military Retirees, Medically Retired Veterans, and the Spouses of Those Retiree Veterans Who Have Passed Away. By Rebecca Higgins

Bipartisan North Carolina House Bill 83 exempts military retirement pay from NC state income tax for ALL military retirees (currently only those with creditable service prior to 1988 are exempt). HB 83 also eliminates state income taxes on the Survivor Benefit Plan payments for surviving spouses of retirees and those service members that are medically retired.

Currently the bill has passed the House and its first reading in the Senate. It has been referred to the Committee for Rules and Operations in the Senate as of June 21, 2021. Currently they are in recess, so it is a good time to contact your Senator.

32 other states do not tax military retirement pay.

Why should you care?

This affects Legion/Auxiliary members! Anyone who joined the military after 1985 and retired is currently being taxed. Young Surviving Spouses are being taxed.

This bill puts money back in the pockets of those who have honorably served our country for more than 20 years.

It puts money back in the pockets of Wounded Warriors.

It means widows/surviving spouses keep more of the money their military member provided for them.

Tax relief keeps young talented workers in NC. Retirees can be as young as 48 years old.

MEMBERSHIP! Support for this bill, through contacting your Senator individually or as a unit, shows that we are committed to fighting for today's military members and recent retirees. These are the very people that we would like to see join the Legion and the Auxiliary. If we want them to care about us, we need to show that we care about them. Support for this bill and putting money back in their pockets is a powerful way to do that.

And most importantly of all – it is the right thing to do for the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Coast Guard, and Space Force that we support

Spotlight on Legislation supported by the American Legion.

Improve Health Care for Women Veterans

From The American Legion Legislative Point Paper Improving Care for Women Veterans

Women have served in the U.S. Armed Forces since the American Revolution. They have stood shoulder-to-shoulder with their male counterparts filling roles critical to our country's national security. Women are the fastest growing demographic in the armed forces and veteran community. According to recent Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data, they are expected to increase by 0.6 percent annually from 2015 on and to reach 2.2 million women veterans by 2045. VA must plan now to account for these demographic shifts and ensure that women veterans are provided high quality care and resources. With the recent passing of provisions of the Deborah Sampson Act, a comprehensive bill that addressed the needs of many women veterans, VA has the opportunity to oversee these programmatic changes, research initiatives, and encourage the creation of a gender-inclusive environment within VA medical facilities. VA must be prepared to serve the gender-specific needs of women veterans now that Congress has given

them the tools to do so. Additionally, VA should consider the barriers women face when seeking health services. While VA offers Maternity Care Coordinators (MCC) at every VA Medical Center, this program often goes overlooked and underutilized due to VA's lack of promotion. The American Legion urges Congress to extend post-delivery care services for newborns and examine the need for childcare services within VA facilities for the convenience of veterans seeking medical treatment pre- and post-delivery.

Key Points • Women have voluntarily served in every war since the American Revolution.

- By 2045, the number of women veterans will rise to 2.2 million, doubling the share of veterans who are women from 9 percent to 18 percent. **What Can Congress Do?**

- The American Legion urges Congress to diligently oversee the implementation of recently passed VA pilot programs, research initiatives, and policy revisions contained in the Deborah Sampson Act passed last December;

- Additionally, The American Legion encourages expansion of newborn care and gender specific services at VA. Relevant Resolutions: Resolution No. 37 (August 2016): Improvements to Department of Veterans Affairs Women Veterans Programs Resolution No. 147 (August 2016): Women Veterans The American Legion Legislative Point Paper Telehealth/Rural Health Background Accessibility is often a barrier for veterans and caregivers when pursuing health services from VA. A quarter of all veterans, nearly 5 million, live in rural communities and rely on the Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) Office of Rural Health (ORH) to meet some or all their healthcare needs. Barriers to receiving care include inadequate internet access, lack of transportation, and physical limitations often related to their time in service. Studies show that 27 percent of veterans residing in rural areas do not have access to internet in their home and 56 percent of rural veterans enrolled in VHA are 65 years or older. In addition, compared to veterans who reside in urban environments, rural veterans have higher poverty rates, poorer health, and have access to fewer physicians. This can be attributed to insufficient transportation to medical appointments, poor internet infrastructure, and lack of qualified medical personnel and providers nearby. This often forces veterans to commute long distances in hopes of receiving healthcare services. Oftentimes these trips to VA medical facilities take several hours across state lines; discouraging the veteran from routinely seeking the care they need. The American Legion supports bills and provisions that will ensure veterans and their caregivers have access to consistent, quality access to care, to include reliable telehealth capabilities regardless of their geographic location and accessibility capabilities.

Key Point

- Rural residents are more likely to die from heart disease, cancer, unintentional injury, chronic lower respiratory disease, and stroke than their urban counterparts.

- The ability to recruit and retain physicians, nurses, and all other types of providers—long a challenge in rural America—continues to limit access to care. **What Can Congress Do?** • Provide adequate funding to support the further expansion of broadband capabilities and other services for veterans in remote areas to better meet their needs.

- Support VA's Office of Rural Health initiatives to remove accessibility barriers for rural veterans and those who access telehealth.

- Authorize grants and additional financial support regarding the transportation of veterans in highly rural locations. Relevant Resolution: Resolution No. 75 (August 2017): Department of Veterans Affairs Rural Health Care Program **Current Legislation that is supported by The American Legion**

The following is a list of current legislation supported by the American Legion. Please contact your U.S. Senators and Representative and let them know you stand with the American Legion in support of these issues. You may choose any of the following that you are passionate about or you may select all of them.

Address Toxic Exposure & Burn Pits
Resolution No. 118, 2016

Improve Health Care for Women Veterans
Resolution No. 37, 2016

Telehealth/Rural Health
Resolution No. 75, 2017

Address the Forever War
Resolution No. 22, 2020

Citizenship for Honorable Service
Resolution No. 15, 2018

Pay the Coast Guard
Resolution No. 23, 2016

Close the 90/10 Loophole
Resolution No. 15, 2019

Military Awards for Minority Veterans
Resolution No. 17, 2020

Peer Support
Resolution No. 364, 2016

Protect the American Flag
Resolution No. 19, 2016

Global War on Terrorism Memorial
Resolution No. 16, 2017