



LEGISLATIVE DIVISION UPDATE

Week ending October 10th, 2020

Congress

The House and the Senate have taken different approaches to create safe working spaces during the pandemic. The House instituted proxy voting and encouraged the use of remote or hybrid (some people in the room, some on line) hearings. The Senate has relied more heavily upon mask wearing, social distancing, and other basic public health protections.

House Speaker Pelosi (D-CA) and Treasury Secretary Mnuchin were quietly talking about another COVID stimulus bill until the President tweeted Tuesday afternoon that nothing more would happen until after the election. The stock market fell and Republicans across the board expressed dismay on television and with reporters. By Wednesday, the President was offering to sign stand-alone bills for individual assistance and for helping the airlines. There are rumors that Pelosi and Mnuchin are again calling each other, and White House Chief of Staff Meadows said the President would be interested in an aid bill around \$1.7 trillion. Pelosi does not favor stand-alone bills for the airlines or other industries unless they are paired with larger stimulus packages for the general public and state and local governments.

Pelosi Thursday morning told reporters “we are going to be talking about the 25th Amendment” on Friday. This is the provision that deals with removing a President due to the individual’s incapacitation. Concern has been raised in the past week over the President’s COVID diagnosis. His physicians said on Wednesday the President had no more COVID symptoms.

The Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress has released its report. To improve the federal appropriations process, they recommend that Congress move to a biennial budget. They also suggest creating a community-focused grant program. Limited to one percent of discretionary spending, the program would enable lawmakers’ efforts to steer federal dollars to projects in their own districts or states. The loss of earmarks has been identified as one reason lawmakers find it so easy to not support appropriations bills. These are just a few of the recommendations put forth by the committee.

Upcoming Hearings

- No upcoming hearings at this time.

Grassroots

The National Legislative Division (NLD) uses VoterVoice as its advocacy platform for connecting American Legion members with members of Congress. From October 3rd to October 9th twelve (12) members subscribed to receive action alerts while zero (0) unsubscribed. **There are now 24,043 members and supporters signed up to receive action alerts.**

On Thursday, October 8, the NLD launched a new VoterVoice Campaign to get our members to email their representatives and senators in support of a bill that would require VA to designate one week a year as Buddy Check Week, modeled directly after TAL Buddy Check Program. The campaign was first placed in [this article](#) highlighting the bills and will again be sent out to all members Tuesday, October 13th through the National Commander. It will also be shared with Department Commanders and Adjutants and the Legislative Commission and Council on Tuesday. Feel free to share it with your networks sooner so we can reach the largest amount of people! Below is the link and if you have any question feel free to email grassroots@legion.org.
<https://votervoicenet.com/AmericanLegion/Campaigns/77447/Respond>

Legislative AARs

- On Monday, October 5, NLD staff participated in a joint VSO conference call to discuss coordinating efforts on a variety of issues concerning the Veterans Benefits Administration.
- On Monday, October 5, NLD staff participated in a webinar titled “With Friends Like These: The Criticality of Allies Who Care in Great Power Competition.”
- On Tuesday, October 6, NLD staff participated in a Government Affairs Leadership Weekly Meeting.
- On Tuesday, October 6, NLD attended a VA led conference call that discussed the newest research findings on the correlation between increasing alcohol and substance abuse rates among veterans during the COVID-19 pandemic. This data emphasized the importance of telehealth communication with mental health services, strong peer and family support systems, and the need for policy that better serves the veteran community’s mental health needs.
- On Wednesday, October 7, NLD participated in a VA webinar on the gender disparities among women veterans that often lead to chronic musculoskeletal pain related to their service. This conversation mentioned many ways women and their gender-specific needs are not represented in the creation of military equipment. Ill-fitting equipment often causes undue stress and strain on the human body causing long-term chronic pain and aches. This among other topics were explored through a gender-inclusive lens.
- On Wednesday, October 7, NLD joined a VA webinar on suicide prevention brief intervention methods. This webinar evaluated the data on the effectiveness of the intervention and how the VA should construct policy that will allow VA employees to feel more empowered when intervening on suicide attempts on VA property.
- On Thursday, October 8, NLD staff participated in a call with Former Representative James Longley on topics regarding veteran and retiree health care.
- On Thursday, October 8, NLD attended a VA call on women veterans’ reproductive

health ranging from pregnancy to menopause. The gender-specific needs of women who have served were evaluated and VA services to address those needs were also assessed during this presentation. Overall, the presentation concluded that VA has much room for improvement and growth when it comes to providing comprehensive care for women veterans and their reproductive health needs.

- On Thursday, October 8, NLD participated in a VA webinar on the impact of military sexual trauma (MST) has on women veterans' primary care following the traumatic incident. The VA had many divisions within VA present their findings on the topic. Therefore the participants received data from a mental health, social, economic and financial, and biological perspective.
- On Thursday, October 8, NLD participated in the Commanders Advisory Committee and briefed on several topics including legislation regarding Buddy Check Week and WWII veteran health care.
- On Friday, October 9, NLD held the quarterly legislative call to discuss with the Legislative Commission and Council about key legislation for the last quarter of the year.

Lawrence Montreuil, Legislative Director
The American Legion Legislative Division
(202) 263-2981