



## American Legion Department of Illinois Legislative Commission

### Agenda Fall 2023

9/29/2023

Kevin Kilkenny (3), kevk0648@gmail.com  
Detrall Dearbone (1), detralldearbone@yahoo.com  
Edward Stash (2), estash48@gmail.com  
Larry Miller (5), eljayem@gmail.com  
Art Rodriguez (4), isaiah1822000@yahoo.com  
Wayne Madson (SAL), madsonwsr@gmail.com

## Agenda Items 103<sup>rd</sup> Session

### Bill Status of HB0925

**Short Description:** MILITARY SERVICE-TECH

#### **Synopsis As Introduced**

Amends the Service Member Employment and Reemployment Rights Act. Makes a technical change in a Section concerning the short title.

Requires non-congressional service organizations to apply for a state charter with the Attorney Generals office and regulate who can sit in on VAC's

Public Act . . . . . [103-0405](#)

### ~~Bill Status of HB104~~—Could Not Find in 103<sup>rd</sup> Session Page

~~Short Description:~~—PROP TX VETERANS WWII

#### Last Action

Date	Chamber	Action			
1/12/2023	House	Referred to <a href="#">Rules Committee</a>			

#### Statutes Amended In Order of Appearance

[35 ILCS 200/15-169](#)

#### Synopsis As Introduced

Amends the Property Tax Code. In a Section granting a homestead exemption to veterans with disabilities, provides that property that is used as a qualified residence by a veteran who was a member of the United States Armed Forces during World War II is exempt from taxation regardless of the veteran's level of disability. Provides that a veteran who qualifies as a result of his or her service in World War II need not reapply for the exemption. Effective immediately.

### Bill Status of HB1154 103rd General Assembly

Short Description: PROP TX-DISABLED VETERANS

#### Last Action

Date	Chamber	Action			
2/15/2023	House	Assigned to <a href="#">Revenue &amp; Finance Committee</a>			

#### Statutes Amended In Order of Appearance

[35 ILCS 200/15-169](#)

#### Synopsis As Introduced

Amends the Property Tax Code. Provides that the surviving spouse of a veteran who has a service connected disability of 100% and is deemed to be permanently and totally disabled need not reapply for the homestead exemption for veterans with disabilities. Effective immediately.

Rule 19(a) / Re-referred to [Rules Committee](#)

### Bill Status of HB1217 103rd General Assembly

Short Description: VETERANS' LICENSURE TASK FORCE

#### Last Action

Date	Chamber	Action			
2/15/2023	House	Assigned to <a href="#">Veterans' Affairs Committee</a>			

#### Statutes Amended In Order of Appearance

New Act

#### Synopsis As Introduced

Creates the Veterans' Licensure and Workforce Task Force Act. Creates the Veterans' Licensure and Workforce Task

Force to advise the Governor and General Assembly and work directly with State agencies and institutions of higher education to improve and expand policies, services, programs, and opportunities for service members, veterans, and their families. Provides specified subjects for the Task Force to review and make recommendations on. Requires the Task Force to prepare and submit a report of its findings and recommendations to the General Assembly and the Governor on or before December 1, 2023, and to other specified agencies in electronic form. Provides that the Act is repealed on December 1, 2024. Effective immediately.

Rule 19(a) / Re-referred to [Rules Committee](#)

## Bill Status of HB1239 *103rd General Assembly* (OPPOSED by VFW)

**Short Description:** IDOR-VETERANS

### Last Action

Date	Chamber	Action
1/31/2023	House	Referred to <a href="#">Rules Committee</a>

### Statutes Amended In Order of Appearance

20 ILCS 2505/2505-810 new

[30 ILCS 105/5.990 new](#)

### Synopsis As Introduced

Amends the Department of Revenue Law of the Civil Administrative Code of Illinois. Requires eligible school districts to report to the Department of Revenue (i) the total amount of veterans' homestead exemptions granted for the 2022 levy year for property located in the eligible school district and (ii) the total amount of veterans' homestead exemptions granted for the current levy year for property located in the eligible school district. Provides that the Department shall certify the difference, if any, between the current levy year exemption amount and the levy year 2022 exemption amount for each eligible school district. Provides that those amounts shall be transferred from the General Revenue Fund to the Support our Veterans and Neighbors Fund. Provides that an "eligible school district" is a school district that contains residential property that is located within 45 miles of a United States military base. Creates the Support our Veterans and Neighbors Fund. Provides that moneys in the Support our Veterans and Neighbors Fund shall be used to make grants to eligible school districts.

Rule 19(a) / Re-referred to [Rules Committee](#)

## Bill Status of HB1350 *103rd General Assembly*

**Short Description:** INC TX-VETERAN CAREGIVER

### Last Action

Date	Chamber	Action
2/21/2023	House	Assigned to <a href="#">Revenue &amp; Finance Committee</a>

### Statutes Amended In Order of Appearance



**Synopsis As Introduced**

Amends the Illinois Income Tax Act. Creates an income tax credit for taxpayers who are caregivers of a veteran with a disability. Provides that the credit shall be in an amount equal to 5% of the costs incurred in caring for the veteran, not to exceed \$1,000 in credits in any taxable year. Effective immediately.

Rule 19(a) / Re-referred to [Rules Committee](#)

**Bill Status of HB1581** 103rd General Assembly

**Short Description:** VEH-SUBMARINE SERVICE PLATES

**Last Action**

Date	Chamber	Action
1/31/2023	House	Referred to <a href="#">Rules Committee</a>

**Statutes Amended In Order of Appearance**

625 ILCS 5/3-699.22 new

**Synopsis As Introduced**

Amends the Illinois Vehicle Code. Allows the Secretary of State to issue special registration plates designated as United States Submarine Veterans plates to each resident of this State who served in the United States Navy as a submariner.

Public Act . . . . . [103-0130](#)

**Bill Status of SB0091** 103rd General Assembly

**Short Description:** UNIV OF IL-VETERAN SCHOLARSHIP

**Last Action**

Date	Chamber	Action
1/31/2023	Senate	Assigned to <a href="#">Appropriations- Education</a>

**Statutes Amended In Order of Appearance**

[110 ILCS 305/9](#)

from Ch. 144, par. 30

**Synopsis As Introduced**

Amends the University of Illinois Act. Provides that a county is entitled to a scholarship in the University of Illinois for the benefit of the children of persons who served in the armed forces of the United States until any time on or after August 2, 1990 and until Congress or the President orders that persons in service are no longer eligible for the Kosovo Campaign Medal or the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal.

Rule 3-9(a) / Re-referred to [Assignments](#)

## Bill Status of SB0213 *103rd General Assembly*

**Short Description:** BURIAL RIGHTS-VISITATIONS

### Last Action

Date	Chamber	Action
1/31/2023	Senate	Referred to <a href="#">Assignments</a>

### Statutes Amended In Order of Appearance

[820 ILCS 135/1](#)

from Ch. 21, par. 101

### As Introduced

Amends the Burial Rights Act. Provides that contracts between cemetery authorities and cemetery worker's associations prohibiting in any manner dedications of monuments or headstones, family visitations, or visitations to veterans memorials on Sundays or legal holidays shall be deemed to be void as against public policy and wholly unenforceable. Makes conforming changes.

Referred to [Assignments](#)

## Bill Status of SB0220 *103rd General Assembly*

**Short Description:** PROP TX-VETERAN-COMMERCIAL

### Last Action

Date	Chamber	Action
1/31/2023	Senate	Referred to <a href="#">Assignments</a>

### Statutes Amended In Order of Appearance

[35 ILCS 200/15-169](#)

### Synopsis As Introduced

Amends the Property Tax Code. Provides that the portion of the property that is used by a business that is certified by the United States Small Business Administration as a Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business (SDVOSB) is not considered to be used for commercial purposes for the purposes of the homestead exemption for veterans with disabilities. Effective immediately.

Referred to [Assignments](#)

## Bill Status of SB0274 *103rd General Assembly*

**Short Description:** VEH CD-REG FEES-VETERANS-WAIVE

### Last Action

Date	Chamber	Action
------	---------	--------

1/31/2023	Senate	Referred to <a href="#">Assignments</a>			
-----------	--------	---	--	--	--

#### Statutes Amended In Order of Appearance

[625 ILCS 5/3-806.7](#)

#### Synopsis As Introduced

Amends the Illinois Vehicle Code. Provides that the standard registration fee for passenger motor vehicles of the first division and motor vehicles of the second division weighing not more than 8,000 pounds shall be waived for any veteran who holds proof from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs of a service-connected disability.

Referred to [Assignments](#)

#### Bill Status of SB1376 *103rd General Assembly*

**Short Description:** HOUSING-HOMELESS VETS & FAMILY

#### Hearings

Veterans Affairs Hearing Feb 23 2023 9:00AM Capitol 400 Springfield, IL

#### Last Action

Date	Chamber	Action			
2/14/2023	Senate	Assigned to <a href="#">Veterans Affairs</a>			

#### Statutes Amended In Order of Appearance

[310 ILCS 85/15](#)

#### Synopsis As Introduced

Amends the Homeless Family Placement Act. In a provision listing certain factors a referring agency must consider prior to referring a homeless family with school age children to a shelter, requires the referring agency to also consider the military status of any member of the family to determine the family's eligibility for State or federal benefits and other supportive services for homeless veterans and their families, including, but not limited to, housing or rental assistance, job training, and employment opportunities.

Public Act . . . . . [103-0086](#)

#### Bill Status of SB1595 *103rd General Assembly*

**Short Description:** VITAL RECORDS-CERTIFICATES

#### Hearings

Veterans Affairs Hearing Feb 23 2023 9:00AM Capitol 400 Springfield, IL



**Last Action**

Date	Chamber	Action
2/14/2023	Senate	Assigned to <a href="#">Veterans Affairs</a>

**Statutes Amended In Order of Appearance**[410 ILCS 535/25](#)

from Ch. 111 1/2, par. 73-25

**Synopsis As Introduced**

Amends the Vital Records Act. In provisions concerning the search of death certificates for service members, replaces references to active duty or retired service members with references to active duty service members or veterans. Effective immediately.

Public Act . . . . . [103-0095](#)**Bill Status of SB2005** *103rd General Assembly***Short Description:** HOUSING-VET PREFERENCE**Last Action**

Date	Chamber	Action
2/21/2023	Senate	Assigned to <a href="#">Veterans Affairs</a>

**Statutes Amended In Order of Appearance**

310 ILCS 10/34 new

**Synopsis As Introduced**

Amends the Housing Authorities Act. Requires housing authorities to develop and implement policies granting housing preferences to veterans who are homeless. Provides that such preferences shall be cumulative with any other preference allowed by a housing authority for which the veteran qualifies. Provides that nothing in the amendatory Act shall be construed to supersede any federal law or regulation.

Public Act . . . . . [103-0247](#)**Bill Status of SJR0010** *103rd General Assembly***Short Description:** ATOMIC VETERANS HIGHWAY**Last Action**

Date	Chamber	Action
1/31/2023	Senate	Referred to <a href="#">Assignments</a>

**Synopsis As Introduced**

Designates the portion of Illinois Route 171 between Illinois Route 83 and U.S. Route 45 as the "Atomic Veterans Highway".

Referred to [Assignments](#)



## 102nd General Assembly

Bill	Short Description	Status-Last Action	Description
HR			
0062	Audit La Salle Vets-Covid 19	<b>Resolution Adopted 111-000-001</b>	
0136	PTSI Day	Resolution Adopted	
0167	Montford Port Marines Day	Resolution Adopted	
0231	Urges/ End State of War-Korea	Resolution Adopted	
0305	Gen. Thomas Draude Day	Resolution Adopted	
0692	Gold Star Spouses Day	<b>Resolution Adopted 114-000-000</b>	
0743	Welcome Home Vietnam Vets Day	Resolution Adopted	
0760	PTSI Day & Month	Resolution Adopted	
HB			
0359	Military Service-Tech	Public Act . . . . . 102-0695	The Department shall create a Veterans' Accountability Unit which shall receive complaints and recommendations from: (i) veterans and other Illinois residents who seek services from the Department;
1815	Veteran's Ailments Taskforce	Public Act . . . . . 102-0417	The Task Force shall review and make recommendations regarding veterans' service-related ailments that are not recognized by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, including exploring why certain service-related ailments are not recognized and determining what may be done to have them recognized.
2369	Dept of Vet Affairs-Joining Forces	Public Act . . . . . 102-1132	Tax for Veterans Assistance Commission. The county board of each county having a population of less than 3 million in which there is a Veterans Assistance Commission as provided in Section 9 of the Military Veterans Assistance Act may levy a tax of not to exceed .03% of the assessed value annually on all taxable property of the county, for the purpose of providing assistance to military veterans and their families pursuant to such Act.
2991	Vet Affairs-Field Office	Public Act . . . . . 102-0758	Analysis of field services. Subject to sufficient appropriations for this purpose, the Department shall contract for a market research analysis of field services in this State.
3255	Vet Affairs-Service Officer	Public Act . . . . . 102-0467	All service officers and any supervisors, including the field manager, within the field division He must be an honorably discharged veteran from service in the Armed Forces of the United States. They He must have served during a time of hostilities with a foreign country
3515	Veterans Assistance Commission	Public Act . . . . . 102-0484	In counties having 2 or more posts, camps, chapters or detachments of military veterans organizations as may be recognized by law, a central assistance committee may be organized to be known as the Veterans Assistance Commission of such county
3865	Vet Affairs-Service	Public Act . . . . .	The Consumer Fraud and Deceptive Business

	Disclosure	..... 102-0386	Practices Act is amended by adding Section 2WWW
4998	DHS-Vet Data-Supportive Services	Public Act .... ..... 102-0961	Homeless services and supportive housing; veterans data. The Department's Bureau of Homeless Services and Supportive Housing within the Office of Family Support Services shall annually review and collect data on the number of military veterans receiving services or benefits under the Emergency and Transitional Housing Program, the Emergency Food Program, the Homeless Prevention Program, the Supporting Housing Program, and the Prince Home at Manteno administered by the Department of Veterans' Affairs
5184	Veterans Assistance Commission	Public Act .... ..... 102-0732	Tax for Veterans Assistance Commission The county board of each county having a population of less than 3 million in which there is a Veterans Assistance Commission as provided in Section 9 of the Military Veterans Assistance Act may levy a tax of not to exceed .03% of the assessed value annually on all taxable property of the county, for the purpose of providing assistance to military veterans and their families pursuant to such Act
5385	Dept of Veterans Affairs-Skillbridge	Public Act .... ..... 102-1074	SkillBridge program. Subject to appropriation for this purpose, the Department shall serve as the State's principal assistance organization under the United States Department of Defense's SkillBridge program for employers and transitioning service members.
5542	Dept of Veterans Affairs-Joining Forces	Public Act .... ..... 102-1140	the Department of Veterans' Affairs and the Department of Military Affairs acted to establish the Illinois Joining Forces initiative, a public-private network of military and veteran-serving organizations that are working together, in person and online, to create a system of support for the State's military and veteran communities.
1581	Veh-Submarine Service Plates	Public Act .... ..... 103-0130	issue special registration plates designated as United States Submarine Veterans plates
2507	TOTA-Property Tax Info	Governor Amendatory Veto	Replaces everything after the enacting clause. Amends the Property Tax Code. In a Section granting a homestead exemption to veterans with disabilities, provides that property that is used as a qualified residence by a veteran who was a member of the United States Armed Forces during World War II is exempt from taxation regardless of the veteran's level of disability.
2856	Vital Records Veterans Death	Public Act .... ..... 103-0406	Amends the Vital Records Act. Requires death certificates to include (1) a "Yes" or "No" designation of whether the deceased was a veteran, (2) if the deceased was a veteran, a "Yes" or "No" designation of whether the deceased was receiving a compensatory pension or benefit at the time of his or her death for an illness or injury that may have contributed to his or her death, and (3) if the deceased is designated as having received a compensatory pension or benefit, a "Yes" or "No" designation of whether the illness or injury was a contributing cause or factor in the deceased's death.
SB			
0505	Militart CD-Active Duty Death	Public Act .... ..... 102-0387	Presentation of State flag.
1411	Death Cert-Military Member	Public Act .... ..... 102-0739	If the death certificate requested by the applicant is found, the local registrar or county clerk shall furnish the applicant with one certified copy of the death certificate, under the seal of the local registrar's or county clerk's office, at no cost



			to the applicant
2250	Vet Benefit Funding Report	Public Act . . . . ..... 102- 0549	The Department shall prepare a quarterly report on all locally-held member's benefits funds from each Illinois Veterans Home. The report shall contain the amount of donations received for each veterans' home, including monetary and nonmonetary items, the expenditures and items dispersed, and the end of quarter balance of the locally-held member's benefits funds. The Department shall submit the quarterly report to the General Assembly and to the Governor and publish the report on its website.
3459	Military=Presentation of Flag	Public Act . . . . ..... 102- 1083	any Illinois resident dies while on State Active Duty or while serving in duty or training statuses pursuant to Title 10 or Title 32 of the United States Code as approved by the member's service component, the Adjutant General, the Assistant Adjutant General for Army, or the Assistant Adjutant General for Air, or a representative designated by the Adjutant General may <del>shall</del> present one State flag of Illinois to the next of kin
1376	Housing-Homeless Vets and Families	Public Act . . . . ..... 103- 0086	requires the referring agency to also consider the military status of any member of the family to determine the family's eligibility for State or federal benefits and other supportive services for homeless veterans and their families,
1595	Vital Records Certificates	Public Act . . . . ..... 103- 0095	In provisions concerning the search of death certificates for service members, replaces references to active duty or retired service members with references to active duty service members or honorably discharged veterans (rather than veterans). Defines "veteran" as an individual who served in the Armed Forces of the United States, National Guard, or the reserves of the Armed Forces of the United States.
1935	Property Control-Veterans	Public Act . . . . ..... 103- 0244	Amends the State Property Control Act. Includes qualified veteran-owned small businesses in the list of entities that may receive preference in the disposition of transferable property.
2005	Housing Vet-Preference	Public Act . . . . ..... 103- 0247	Requires housing authorities to develop and implement policies granting housing preferences to veterans who are homeless.
SJR			
0029	Medal of Honor-State Funeral	Rule 19(a) / Re-referred to Rules Committee	Designates U.S. Route 51 starting at N2600 East Road in Assumption north to the Shelby-Macon County Line as the "Conner-Keegan Memorial Highway".



## National Legislative Division Weekly

An Army Veteran who served in the Gulf War, Mrs. Harris is now dedicated to uplifting women veterans' and works to end domestic violence, prevent homelessness, and empower our women veterans.

Chairwoman Harris, the Legislative Division is looking forward to working and learning from you.

If you have made a grassroots effort and would like to be considered for next week's "Legionnaire of the Week," please fill out the Congressional Contact Report Form [here](#). You can also email me at [kryan@legion.org](mailto:kryan@legion.org).

### LEGISLATIVE DIVISION UPDATES

On Tuesday, the Legislative Division hosted the Legislative Chairman's Quarterly Call to review and update our priorities for the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress. We appreciate those of you who were able to attend. The quarterly call can be [viewed here](#).

This week, the Legislative Division submitted a statement for the record for the House Veterans Affairs Committee hearing "VA's Federal Supremacy Initiative: Putting Veterans First?". This statement can be [accessed here](#).

Additionally, Legislative Division Staff attend the House Armed Services Committee Quality of Life Panel's hearing on unaccompanied housing conditions and privatized housing initiatives. The content of this hearing is discussed at-length on the first page.

Finally, the National Commander published a letter in opposition to H.R. 1822 - the *PLUS for Veterans Act*. This letter can be read [here](#).

As part of our ongoing grassroots efforts, NLD staff will be traveling to posts around the country to provide **grassroots training** tailored to the hosting department's needs. If you are interested in hosting a grassroots training event, please contact [grassroots@legion.org](mailto:grassroots@legion.org) or [ejohnson@legion.org](mailto:ejohnson@legion.org).

### UPCOMING CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS

On Wednesday, October 4<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 AM, the Senate Appropriations Committee will receive a closed briefing on U.S. assistance to Ukrainian Air Defenses.

On Wednesday, October 4<sup>th</sup> at 2:30 PM, the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee will hold hearings to examine security on the Korean Peninsula. You can watch this hearing [here](#).

On Wednesday, October 4<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 PM, the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee will hold a hearing titled "VA Accountability and Transparency: A Cornerstone of Quality Care and Benefits for Veterans." You can watch this hearing [here](#).



## National Legislative Division Weekly

declaration of bioterrorism, he said “Mexican drug cartels are going to be treated like the foreign terrorist organizations that they are.” This language clearly aims to escalate the level of defense at the Southern border.

### The War in Ukraine

Dana Perino introduced the topic of Ukraine a little over halfway into the debate. Perino said “Today the Republican Party is at odds over aid to Ukraine.” After mentioning that the total cost of the war to the U.S. sits at \$76 billion, she asked DeSantis, “Is it in our best interest to degrade Russia’s military for less than 5% of what we pay annually on defense, especially when there are no U.S. soldiers in the fight?”

DeSantis then implied that the U.S. would end its involvement. “We are not going to have a blank check. We will not have U.S. troops,” said the Governor. In DeSantis’ view, these funds are better spent in defense of the U.S.-Mexico border. But Former Governor Haley and Senator Scott quickly voiced disapproval of DeSantis’ isolationist. Scott said that “our national vital interest is in degrading the Russian military.” Haley dove deeper, claiming that American defense of Ukraine would not only contain Russia, but also China.

Ramaswamy, in what seems to be a pattern, had the most extreme point of view. He claimed that Putin’s status as “an evil dictator does not mean that Ukraine is good.” Ramaswamy said our involvement only strengthened a Sino-Russian alliance and accused Volodymyr Zelenskyy of supporting Nazis. (This accusation comes after Zelenskyy and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau gave a standing ovation to a Ukrainian World War II veteran; but, [it was not until after the ceremony that President Zelenskyy and Prime Minister Trudeau were made aware that the man had served in a Nazi unit.](#))

Christie pushed back against the idea that we were strengthening a Sino-Russian alliance with our involvement. Rather, Christie claims that this alliance already exists and “we must fight against it” instead of “cuddling up to Vladimir Putin.”

As of now, the Democratic National Convention has not scheduled its debates. The next Republican primary debate will be held November 8<sup>th</sup> in Miami, Florida. The American Legion will continue to publicize its agenda and hopes that all presidential candidates reflect and respect our communities’ priorities.

## LEGIONNAIRE OF THE WEEK

In an effort to recognize the weekly accomplishments of our Legionnaires, we will spotlight an individual every week. These individuals demonstrate exceptional grassroots activism by meeting with/contacting their Congressional Representative/Senator to advocate for veterans. Efforts like these truly make a difference and give veterans a voice in Congress.

### Patricia Harris, North Carolina

This week, we have the honor of spotlighting Chairwoman Patricia Harris of the Department of North Carolina. Patricia has recently been appointed the Chairwoman of the National Legislative Commission.



## National Legislative Division Weekly

In the meantime, The Legislative Division encourages you to use the [Grassroots Action Center](#) to stay up-to-date and in-the-know on our current priorities.

### GOP DEBATE – NATIONAL SECURITY POSITIONS

*This debate was streamed on [Fox.com/live](#), and all following quotes and events reflect the live event. A transcript of the event can be read [here](#).*

On September 27<sup>th</sup>, the second Republican Presidential Debate was held. The seven candidates who were present included Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, Former New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, North Dakota Governor Doug Burgum, Former South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley, Former Vice President Mike Pence, South Carolina Senator Tim Scott, and entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy. Although veterans' issues and military personnel issues went unmentioned, here are the key points on topics affecting national security and defense:

#### **The Government Shutdown**

The likelihood of a government shutdown on October 1<sup>st</sup> has been largely blamed on the extreme polarization and partisanship of members of Congress. In the debate on Wednesday, moderator Ilia Calderon touched on the divide within the candidates' own party, asking Former Governor Christie if voters should "blame populist Republicans" if the government shuts down. Chris Christie, after a short digression, claimed, "it is to the blame of everyone in Washington, D.C. who has failed to do their jobs."

Christie, along with Governor DeSantis, spoke of the possibility of shutdown as a symptom of mismanagement and unnecessary spending in the previous two administrations, referring frequently to the national debt and "wasteful" spending. These were the only two candidates to respond to the question before the topic changed to immigration and border policy. None of the candidates mentioned the effect of the shutdown on military personnel or operations.

#### **Immigration Policy**

Calderon began the discussion by asking Former Vice President Pence if he would work with Congress to reach permanent solution for Dreamers in DACA were permanently ended by the supreme court. Before answering the question, Pence proudly stated that during the Trump Administration he helped reduce illegal immigration and asylum abuse "by 90 percent." After Calderon re-presented her original question, Pence said that if he were president, he would "be ready on day one to get Congress to step up and secure the southern border of the United States."

Governor DeSantis also was able to touch on immigration during his previous response about an impending government shutdown. DeSantis claimed, "They have shut down our national sovereignty by allowing our border to be wide open." Vivek Ramaswamy reiterated DeSantis' point, claiming that a border wall is not enough and the U.S. has to "seal that Southern border" to prevent drug trafficking. He referred to fentanyl brought across the U.S.-Mexico border as a product of "bio-terrorism."

In the first debate, DeSantis claimed he authorize lethal force at the border, and label drug cartels coming from Central and South America as international terrorist. Once again, in agreement with Ramaswamy's



## National Legislative Division Weekly

With just two days left in the fiscal year 2023 and Congress unable to pass a budget for 2024, the possibility



of a government shutdown is increasingly threatening. All federal agencies whose appropriations bills have not been passed will only perform [essential functions](#), and staff [will not receive any compensation](#) until their budget is passed. During the last shutdown, the Department of Homeland Security had yet to receive its budget. This meant that the Coast Guard was left without pay for that time. Unfortunately, legislation to correct this issue fell through the cracks.

Now, years later, the issue has been compounded. Once again, the Department of Homeland Security

(DHS) [does not have a passed budget](#). However, unlike the 2019 shutdown, the Department of Defense (DOD) also [does not have a budget](#) for this year. This means that, across all five branches of the armed services, over [1 million military members and furloughed civilian employees](#) will be asked to go without pay for the duration of a shutdown. These servicemembers will continue to work on behalf of our country without a sure date of pay, which can be especially harrowing for [junior-enlisted servicemembers who often live from paycheck to paycheck](#).

As both houses of Congress scramble to pass stopgap measures to prevent a total shutdown, some lawmakers have started introducing emergency legislation to guarantee military pay if DHS and DOD do not receive funding by October 1<sup>st</sup>. In the House of Representatives, the [Pay Our Troops Act](#) (H.R. 5641) was introduced on September 21<sup>st</sup>, a little over a week before the potential shut down. The bill, which has garnered about 60 co-sponsors, would provide appropriations for servicemembers and civilian employees in the Armed Forces in the event of a fiscal year 2024 shutdown. By using unappropriated treasury funds, H.R. 5641 would guarantee that military personnel until regular appropriations legislation is passed for DHS and DOD.

The American Legion will continue to monitor the status of appropriations and emergency military pay legislation in both the House and the Senate. National Commander Daniel J. Seehafer has issued a statement in support of H.R. 5641, which can be [read here](#).

If you would like to advocate for this bill, you can use [this link](#) to encourage your representatives to pass the *Pay Our Troops Act*.

At The American Legion, pay parity for the Coast Guard will remain a legislative priority even after the current appropriations debacle is resolved. As stated by [Past National Commander Vincent J. "Jim" Troiola](#), the Coast Guard "should be paid whether or not their funding comes from DoD. It's a national security issue. We must take care of our servicemembers and their families."



## National Legislative Division Weekly

According to [Ms. Field's testimony](#) to the House Armed Services Committee Quality of Life Panel on Wednesday, September 27<sup>th</sup>, mold is the most common problem and goes unresolved in many buildings despite frequent reporting. On top of the obvious health issues, one servicemember told Ms. Fields team that the lack of response to the issue made residents feel "[expendable – like they didn't matter](#)." GAO also heard reports of bed bugs and broken air conditioning, making it virtually impossible to get the needed sleep for quality training and work. A resident described his room, infested with bedbugs and unprotected from extreme temperatures, as "suffocating."

The barracks' insufficiencies are impacting residents' nutrition as well. Where DOD standards require each room to have a kitchenette, the military services' standards do not reflect that requirement. GAO toured many units that only had a microwave and small refrigerator. Servicemembers in these residences said that they weren't getting proper nutrition, [since they could only microwave meals and had rely in part on fast food](#).

These conditions are not only undignified and disrespectful to the people who have enlisted to serve our country, but they also have clear, [negative implications for servicemembers' readiness](#). [Officials at these installations have confirmed](#) that the low morale, insufficient sleep, poor nutrition, and health issues caused by mold are making it difficult for servicemembers to perform during work and training.

The report did not stop with physical health and safety implications; the conditions in barracks threaten the physical safety and security of residents as well. Many installations had completely [non-operational fire alarm systems](#) with no published timeframe for repair. Moreover, many doors and windows were broken which infringed on many servicemembers feeling of security. [In some cases](#), these unsecurable entrances had been used by intruders to enter and assault servicemembers. "Sexual assault happens in the barracks more often than people think," [one servicemember told Ms. Fields](#) in a discussion on these issues.

This information led the GAO to a total of [31 recommendations](#) to DOD ranging from oversight measures to updating nearly nonexistent health standards. While DOD did full agree to 23 of these and partially to 8, [they have not yet taken action to implement](#) any of these recommendations.

The GAO will continue to monitor the steps taken by DOD to improve oversight and recommends that Congress [turns their 31 points into legislation](#).

## BILLS TO ENSURE MILITARY PAY DURING SHUTDOWN ARE INTRODUCED



## National Legislative Division Weekly

### GRASSROOTS ALERT: TELL CONGRESS TO PAY OUR TROOPS

With a government shutdown looming, our servicemembers are facing the prospect of not being paid even as they serve across the globe, unless immediate action is taken.

The *Pay Our Troops Act* will protect military servicemembers and certain Department of Defense civilian employees and contractors should the government shut down on October 1st, and we need your help to make this a priority in the House of Representatives!

**The American Legion supports the Pay our Troops Act and encourages all Legionnaires to contact their members of Congress and ask them to support the legislation. Click [here](#) to reach out today.**

### SUBSTANDARD LIVING CONDITIONS FOUND IN MILITARY BARRACKS

Mold, bedbugs, unsafe drinking water, nonexistent heating and air conditioning. This nauseating list only provides a small glimpse into the poor barrack conditions investigated by the Government Accountability Office.



On September 19<sup>th</sup>, the [Government Accountability Office \(GAO\)](#) publicly released its 118-page report on the potentially unsafe living conditions of unaccompanied military housing, and revealed the incompetency of the Department of Defense's maintenance, improvement, and oversight measures.

Unaccompanied military housing, a term that is used interchangeably with barrack by the GAO, is [used primarily by junior-enlisted service members](#) who are required to live in the facilities. These servicemembers, usually teenagers who recently completed high school, have not been consulted or surveyed by the Department of Defense (DOD) about their living conditions in the barracks, [according to the GAO Director of Defense Capabilities and Management Elizabeth Field](#). While the DOD claimed their lack of surveyance and data collection was because junior-enlisted members were unreliable or did not respond to inquiries, GAO found that these young men and women were eager to share their experiences.