



July 18, 2025

WEEKLY GRASSROOTS NEWSLETTER

This week, we are asking Legionnaires to contact Congress to request support for *the Service Dogs Assisting Veterans (SAVES) Act!* This bill proposes a five-year pilot program for the VA to award grants to nonprofit organizations to provide trained service dogs to eligible veterans, cover the cost of training, and provide life-long veterinary insurance. *The American Legion supports this legislation, and we appreciate all the emails you have sent so far.*

Go to the [Action Center](#) to quickly email a letter of support to your members of Congress.

Have you had a recent meeting or phone call with your member of Congress? Report your contact today! Click [here](#) to register your Congressional contact and demonstrate the power of The American Legion advocacy in action.

NEED TO FIND YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS?

<https://www.votervoice.net/AmericanLegion/Address>

Wisconsin	139
New York	122
Kansas	121
Florida	113
Pennsylvania	95

TOP GRASSROOTS DEPARTMENTS

These are the number of e-mail messages these Departments sent to Congress on the VoterVoice campaigns this past week.

Register more participants in your Department to increase the number of veteran voices advocating on the Hill!

<https://www.votervoice.net/AmericanLegion/Register>

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

The American Legion's 106th National Convention is from August 22-28 in Tampa Bay, Florida. To stay up to date on information, schedules, and more, go to the information page [here](#).

The Legislative Commission will meet Saturday August 23rd in Tampa Bay to hear updates from the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees and discuss best-practices for conducting meetings with your members of Congress.

SENATE PANEL BACKS PLANS FOR \$456 BILLION VA BUDGET NEXT YEAR

This article's original publication can be found [here](#)



Senate appropriators on Thursday advanced plans for a \$456 billion budget for Veterans Affairs programs and benefits next fiscal year, putting it generally in line with House and White House goals for future department spending.

Unlike the House draft adopted last month, however, the Senate VA appropriations plan advanced out of committee with broad bipartisan support and without a bevy of controversial social issue amendments.

Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, and chairwoman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, praised the bill's passage as an important step forward for the federal budget process and for supporting America's veterans.

"It helps to fund the VA Health Care System, makes investments to improve mental health care, includes programs to assist in the prevention of veteran suicide, homelessness prevention programs, supports our family caregivers and expands care for our rural veterans," she said. "It also funds important veterans benefits, including disabilities, pensions, the GI Bill and employment training programs."

House lawmakers' budget plan for the department totaled about \$453 billion, but both the House and Senate drafts call for roughly \$134 billion in discretionary funding, money for new program starts and initiatives.

That total is slightly less than what White House officials asked for in their budget proposal, but only by about \$1 billion.

Most of the debate in Thursday's Senate Committee markup focused not on the VA spending plans but instead the controversial rescissions package adopted by the chamber the night before. That measure would pull back about \$9 billion in congressionally authorized spending, including money for foreign aid and public media programs.

But those objections were not enough to deter most Democrats from backing the Republican-led VA budget plan.

The Senate proposal includes language ensuring that veterans "are never denied care or timely access to care as a result of the damaging or arbitrary cuts to the VA workforce," a reference to recent workforce reductions at the department.

Last week, VA officials backtracked on earlier plans to trim up to 80,000 employees from the department's payroll, instead projecting a reduction of about 30,000 individuals by the end of September.

Veterans Affairs leaders have seen regular budget increases annually for more than 20 years, even amid frequent congressional and White House efforts to reduce federal spending.

In fiscal 2001, the VA budget — both mandatory and discretionary — totaled just \$45 billion. In 2011, it was about \$125 billion. In fiscal 2023, the total topped \$300 billion for the first time. The House-passed plan for fiscal 2026 would now push that total over the \$400 billion level, and cost more than the combined fiscal 2025 budgets of the Army, Air Force and Marine Corps.

Senate officials have not said when the budget plan could come before the full chamber for a vote, but Collins said Republican leaders have committed to acting on the issue in coming months.

NEW VA PROGRAM FOR VETERANS FACING FORECLOSURE CLEARS LAST HURDLE IN CONGRESS

This article's original publication can be found [here](#)

Legislation that creates a safety net for thousands of veterans facing foreclosure with delinquent home mortgages now moves to the president's desk for his signature after passing the Senate.

The VA Home Loan Program Reform Act, which was adopted by the Senate with a voice vote late Tuesday, establishes a partial claim program that allows veterans who are behind on home loan payments to receive federal assistance.

A companion bill in the House was adopted by voice vote in May.

The bill authorizes the VA to purchase a portion of the debt on veterans loans in default or at imminent risk of default, according to the legislation.

[The mortgage industry](#) estimates more than 20,000 current borrowers are considered seriously delinquent and a partial claim program at the VA could help them retain their homes, lawmakers said. The goal is to help veterans catch up on payments and prevent foreclosure, they said.

“First, the bill authorizes the VA to pay the holder of a loan guaranteed by the VA an amount necessary to avoid the foreclosure of the loan, provided that the holder of the loan and the veteran obligated on the loan execute documents to ensure the VA obtains a secured interest in the property covered by the loan,” according to the bill.

Leaders from the House and Senate Veterans’ Affairs committees released a joint statement after the Senate passed the bill.

“This bipartisan and bicameral legislation will assist veterans who are facing financial hardships and provide VA with a tool to better help veterans stay in their homes and avoid foreclosure. The VA Home Loan Program provides one of the best benefits VA has to offer and has helped veterans and their families build home equity since its inception in 1944,” according to the joint statement.

The VA home loan program was created under The Servicemen’s Readjustment Act, which became known as the GI Bill. More than 3.7 million veterans hold active home loans guaranteed by the VA, according to the agency.

Sen. Jerry Moran, R-Kan., chairman of the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee, and Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., the committee’s top Democrat, offered the formal remarks after Senate adoption.

On the House side, Rep. Mike Bost, R-Ill., chairman of the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs, and Rep. Mark Takano of California, the top Democrat on the committee, included their names on the statement.

“This legislation will ensure these veterans have a viable solution to avoid defaulting on their loans, bring their mortgages current, and avoid foreclosure by establishing a replacement partial claims program,” the lawmakers said.

The partial claims program replaces the [Veterans Affairs Servicing Program](#), which was described as a “last-resort option” for delinquent borrowers to lower their mortgage rate and make their monthly payments more affordable.

Under that program, the VA bought the mortgage from the servicer.

But [the program permanently closed May 1](#), after Republican lawmakers complained the VA should not be in the business of buying home mortgages. They argued some veterans might intentionally fall behind on their payments to get a lower mortgage rate from the VA.

“My focus is to ensure that veterans remain in their homes whenever possible,” said Rep. Derrick Van Orden, R-Wis. “But I am concerned that this program could evolve into a financial burden of billions of dollars in bailouts that fall on the shoulders of taxpayers.”

Van Orden introduced the VA Home Loan Program Reform Act in the House for a partial claim program to allow veterans to catch up with their overdue mortgage payments while keeping the original loan.

Under the partial claim program, veterans facing financial hardship can defer missed payments without immediately facing foreclosure, Van Orden said.

The VA Home Loan Program Reform Act received support from lenders and other stakeholders, including the Mortgage Bankers Association, the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion.

“We encourage the VA and mortgage servicers to continue their collaboration as this program is implemented, ensuring that they help mitigate any impact on veterans facing financial hardship while VA takes the necessary steps to establish the new partial claims program properly,” lawmakers said in the joint statement.

LEGIONNAIRE OF THE WEEK

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.

Joseph Marcheggiani, Florida

Joseph, thank you for your steadfast advocacy of Legion priorities; we are honored to name you Legionnaire of the Week!

Joseph met with Congressman Darren Soto at Makinson-Carson Post 10 in Kissimmee. They discussed local veteran needs and the Legislative Agenda. Additionally, the Congressman's aide became a Legionnaire that day, and the Congressman became a member of the Sons of the American Legion!

Thank you, Joseph, for your report and the time you have dedicated to the Legion's legislative priorities.

GRASSROOTS INFORMATION

Interested in what the Legion is advocating for in Congress? Check out our [information papers and Legislative priorities](#). This is a great starting point for a conversation with your elected officials!

As part of our ongoing Grassroots efforts, LegDiv staff is available 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 or ejohnson@legion.org.

You can find relevant legislation and the Legion's stance on them in the [key legislation section of VoterVoice](#).

Register for Action Alerts today at
<https://www.votervoice.net/AmericanLegion/Register>



UPCOMING CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS

As of 7/18, the following hearings are scheduled:

- Tuesday, July 22, 2:00 PM: House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations Oversight Hearing -- *"Counting the Money: Preventing Fraud and Abuse in VA's Bonus Payment Practices for VA Employees"*
- Wednesday, July 23, 10:00 AM: House Committee on Armed Services, Full Committee Hearing -- *"Reforming Defense Acquisition to Deliver Capability at the Speed of Relevance"*
- Wednesday, July 23, 4:00 PM: Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs – *Hearing to Consider Pending Nominations*
- Thursday, July 24, 9:30 AM: Senate Committee on Armed Services Nomination Hearing -- *"To consider the nomination of Admiral Daryl L. Caudle, USN for reappointment to the grade of admiral and to be Chief of Naval Operations"*

HVAC hearings can be viewed at: [Calendar Home | House Committee on Veterans Affairs](#)

SVAC hearings can be viewed at: [Hearings - U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs](#)

HASC hearings can be viewed at: [Hearings – House Armed Services Committee](#)

SASC hearings can be viewed at: [Hearings – U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services](#)

[View The American Legion Legislative Handbook Here](#)