



American Legion Auxiliary Department of California National Security Bulletin March 2024



I'd like to start this bulletin with a reminder that the Service Member Award applications are due to me by May 15th. Please have them in on time so they can be recognized at our Convention as well as National.

Application:

The application can be found online under National Security:

Word Application: <https://calegionaux.org/resources/natsec/service-member-nomination.doc>

PDF Application: <https://calegionaux.org/resources/natsec/service-member-nomination.pdf>

Washington D.C. Conference

Every year members of the Legion, Auxiliary and Sons get to go to Washington D.C. to "Storm the Capitol". While there they get the opportunity to learn about Legislative matters related to our Military and Veterans. This year the Auxiliary asked the National Security Chairman to attend, so I'd like to share my experience and some of the Legislative Issues that are impacting our Military.

We spent Monday hearing from our National Commander Daniel Seehafer and "Be the One". The main goal for the Legion is to have more people trained in our Organization than any other to stop Suicide. The steps to get there is by changing culture through destigmatization, training our members on suicide prevention, research how suicide effects family members especially spouses, holding public awareness events, and using social media to get the word out. The Legion is currently working with Columbia University on the "Be the One Program". Tuesday and Wednesday was spent meeting with our legislators and senators. I worked with California Legionnaires while in Washington D.C. We had sit down meetings with the staff of 3 legislators and stopped by 8 other legislators offices to leave the Legislative Brochure.

Suicide Prevention & Mental Health

Suicide remains a top issue in the veteran community. The suicide rate among veterans is nearly double that of civilian counterparts. It is imperative that we simultaneously destigmatize mental health assistance, while increasing access. The American Legion encourages Congress to robustly fund VA's suicide prevention outreach budget and peer support programs. We encourage all Americans to "Be the One" who is willing, ready, and able to have a difficult conversations about suicide and other mental health issues.

Guard & Reserve GI Bill Parity

National Guard and Reserve servicemembers are being deprived of education benefits that active-duty servicemembers enjoy, despite completing the same duties. According to current law, National Guard and Reserve servicemembers only accrue GI Bill entitlement when called to active duty under federal orders. When Guard and Reserve servicemembers are activated under state orders, they do not accrue eligibility for Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits like their active-duty counterparts do. The American Legion believes that every day in uniform counts and urges Congress to recognize the service of Guard and Reserve servicemembers as eligible for the GI Bill.

Military Quality of Life

The U.S. military's greatest resources are servicemembers and their families. Without highly qualified and committed men and women, even the most sophisticated weaponry will not provide the deterrence necessary to defend our nation. Factors contributing to quality of life include proper compensation, appropriate housing, quality healthcare, reasonably priced commissaries, and access to childcare services. The American Legion urges Congress to pass legislation to expand access to affordable childcare, increase appropriations for military construction projects (including barracks and family housing), and ensuring timely access to mental healthcare.

Pay the Coast Guard

U.S. Coast Guard personnel carry out vital national security missions. Still, because the Coast Guard is under the Department of Homeland Security instead of DOD, its members are more likely to experience pay interruptions during prolonged government shutdowns. The common threat of shutdowns brings severe and unnecessary hardship on these men, women, and their families. The American Legion urges Congress to pass legislation that would guarantee that Coast Guard personnel are paid in case of a shutdown.

Access to healthcare for overseas military and families

Military personnel stationed overseas in support of U.S. interests and our alliances provide a key role in deterring adversaries from a myriad of actions. However, even after the realignment of medical services in overseas and remote locations under the Defense Health Agency (DHA), major issues involving access to various types of healthcare continue. Additionally, the lack of access to certain types of care limits overseas assignments and contributes to military families being separated for extended periods of time.

Improving the military TAP

The American Legion urges Congress to direct the modernization of Transition Assistance Program (TAP) delivery using technology and performance data to ensure the DOD delivers a successful program. The creation of a mobile application, providing servicemembers with an extensive toolkit of on-demand transition-related content would improve participation and increase the benefit of transition resources available. Delivering effective transition assistance will ensure a veteran's proper reintegration from active duty to civilian life and reduce negative experiences. Improved TAP instruction will support our servicemembers in finding education, employment, and entrepreneurship opportunities and send successful citizens back to our communities.