



American Legion Legislative Priorities & Effective Advocacy

Veteran & Active-Duty Military Issues Before Congress

KANSAS AMERICAN LEGION LEADERSHIP COLLEGE

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Introduction

▶ Purpose:

- To inform about the American Legion's key legislative issues and provide guidance on engaging with legislators.

▶ Focus Areas:

- Veterans' healthcare and benefits
- Active-duty military quality of life
- Effective legislative advocacy strategies

Legislative Priorities Overview

- ▶ The American Legion's top legislative priorities for 2025 include:
 - ❑ - Suicide prevention among veterans
 - ❑ - Enhancement of community care services
 - ❑ - Improvement of military quality of life
 - ❑ - Ending veteran homelessness
 - ❑ - Modernization of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP)
 - ❑ - Protection and enhancement of VA benefits
 - ❑ - Support for military families
 - ❑ - Border security initiatives

Suicide Prevention



- ▶ Issue: High rates of suicide among veterans.
- ▶ Legion's Stance: Advocate for full funding of VA's suicide prevention programs.
- ▶ Action: Urge Congress to allocate resources and improve data collection.

Community Care Enhancement

- ▶ Issue: Challenges in accessing timely healthcare for veterans.
- ▶ Legion's Stance: Improve communication between VA and providers.
 - Enhance rural transportation services.

Military Quality of Life

- ▶ Issue: Inflation and outdated infrastructure affecting service members.
- ▶ Legion's Stance: Accelerate funding for military pay and quality-of-life programs.

Ending Veteran Homelessness



- ▶ Issue: Persistent homelessness among veterans.
- ▶ Legion's Stance: Support comprehensive housing, employment, and mental health services.

Transition Assistance Program(TAP) Modernization

- ▶ Issue: Inefficiencies in TAP hinder transition to civilian life.
- ▶ Legion's Stance: Modernize and simplify TAP to better support veterans.

VA Benefits Protection

- ▶ Issue: Policy changes may negatively affect veteran benefits.
- ▶ Legion's Stance: Ensure no adverse impact from new policies.

Support for Military Families

- ▶ Issue: Financial and logistical burdens on military families.
- ▶ Legion's Stance: Advocate for increased support and benefit adjustments.

Border Security



- ▶ Issue: National security concerns related to border threats.
- ▶ Legion's Stance: Strengthen national security with effective border measures.

VOTERVOICE – Grassroots Action Center

- ▶ www.votervoices.net
- ▶ Send your Congressmen & Senators a daily email regarding the issues.
 - ▶ 1. Ships for America Act
 - ▶ 2. GI Bill Parity Act
 - ▶ 3. Major Richard Star Act
 - ▶ 4. Love Lives On: Support Gold Star Spouses

SHIPS for America Act

(Shipbuilding and Harbor Infrastructure for Prosperity and Security)

By the Numbers:

- The United States has a merchant fleet of 185 ships. China has 7,838.
- In 2023, the US built 0.1% of the world's ships. China built 50.7%.
- The US's goal for sealift capacity is 85%. It is currently 59% and dropping.
- America's sealift capacity was USTRANSCOM's number 2 readiness concern in 2021. It is now the top concern.
- The US is now expected to lose 1-2 million square feet of sealift capacity every year.
- The US has a \$163 billion- and \$6.8 billion-dollar maintenance backlog for ports and inland waterways.
- As of 2023 the US had just 5 shipbuilding orders in shipyards. China had 1,700.

GI Bill Parity Act

Currently, National Guard and Reserve servicemembers only earn credit toward their Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits when they mobilize and deploy for federal missions. National Guard and Reserve servicemembers activated under state orders do not accrue eligibility for Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits.

- ▶ ***The Guard and Reserve GI Bill Parity Act of 2025 (HR. 1423/S. 649) is crucial to rectifying this inequity.***

Major Richard Star Act

- ▶ Currently, combat-injured veterans face a reduction in their retirement pay for every dollar of disability compensation they receive.
- ▶ The Major Richard Star Act aims to rectify this by allowing combat-injured veterans to receive both their earned retirement pay and disability compensation without offset.

Love Lives On: Support Gold Star Spouses

- ▶ Gold Star Spouses are currently put in a heartbreaking predicament—choose love and happiness through remarriage before the age of 55 and lose critical benefits, or forgo companionship and keep their benefits.
- ▶ The Love Lives On Act aims to correct this egregious wrong by proposing the following actions:
 - Eliminate the age limit for remarrying without loss of benefits.
 - Allow remarried surviving spouses to retain education benefits.
 - Preserve Commissary and Exchange benefits for remarried spouses.
 - Enable remarried spouses to regain TRICARE benefits if the subsequent marriage ends.
 - Abolish the "Hold Themselves Out to Be Married" clause, an outdated law causing unnecessary fear and inhibiting freedom.

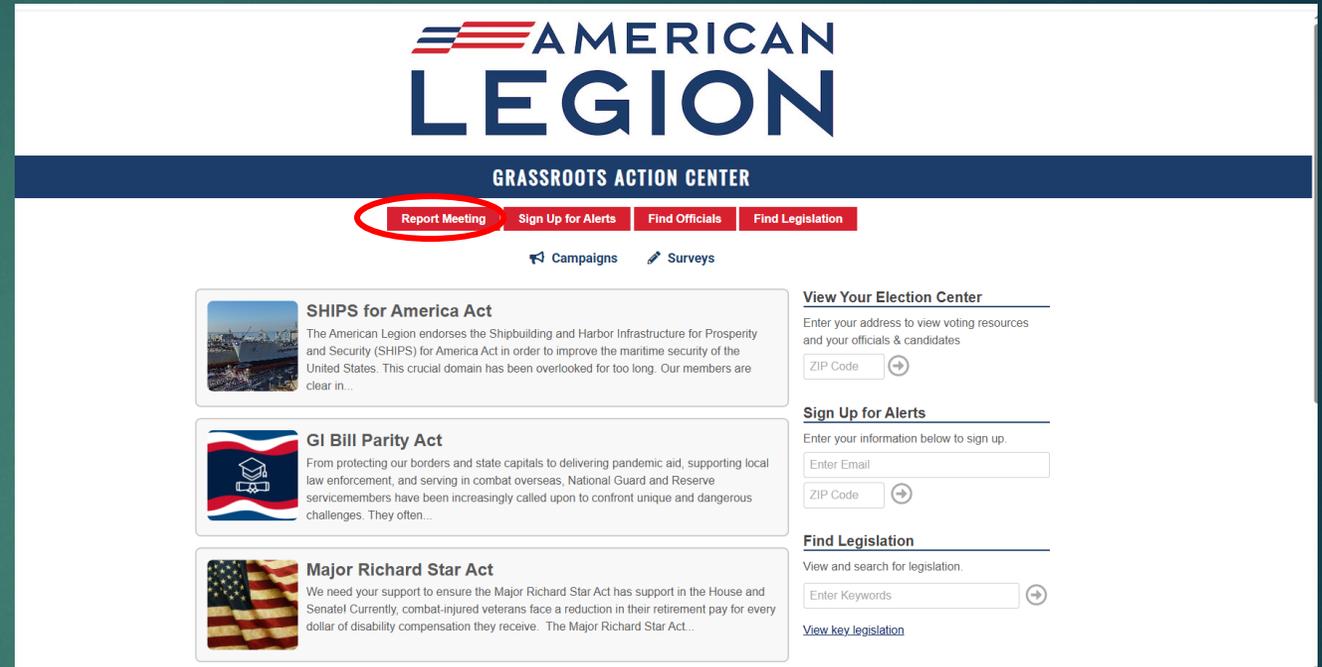
Engaging with Legislators

▶ Methods:

- Personal meetings
- Phone calls
- Letters and emails
- Social media

▶ Tips:

- Be concise and respectful
- Share personal stories
- Follow up on communications



The screenshot shows the American Legion website's Grassroots Action Center. The header features the American Legion logo and the text "GRASSROOTS ACTION CENTER". Below the header, there are four red buttons: "Report Meeting" (circled in red), "Sign Up for Alerts", "Find Officials", and "Find Legislation". Underneath these buttons are links for "Campaigns" and "Surveys". The main content area is divided into three columns. The left column contains three legislative acts: "SHIPS for America Act", "GI Bill Parity Act", and "Major Richard Star Act", each with a small image and a brief description. The middle column contains a "View Your Election Center" section with a form for entering a ZIP code. The right column contains a "Sign Up for Alerts" section with a form for entering an email and ZIP code, and a "Find Legislation" section with a form for entering keywords.

Utilizing Social Media

- ▶ Impact: Influences legislators' attention.
- ▶ Strategy:
 - Use hashtags like #Instate4Vets
 - Engage with legislators' posts

Advocacy Resources

- ▶ American Legion's Advocacy Toolkit
 - Legislative Action Center
 - Legislative Handbook

Conclusion



- ▶ Recap: Advocacy is key to supporting veterans and active-duty personnel.
- ▶ Call to Action: Use the strategies and resources to engage with lawmakers.

Resources

- ▶ Kansas Legislature - www.kslegislature.gov
 - ▶ Committee on Veterans & Military is a good start
- ▶ Federal Lagislature – www.house.gov or www.senate.gov
 - ▶ Legion.org tracks federal legislation and offers the American Legion's support or opposition to each. Go to www.legion.org/legislative
- ▶ VOTER VOICE - Grassroots Action Center
<https://www.votervoice.net/AmericanLegion/home>

Additional Resources

- ▶ Video: A Legionnaire's Guide to Meeting with Lawmakers
- ▶ URL: [A Legionnaire's Guide to meeting with lawmakers](#)
- ▶ <https://www.legion.org/advocacy/legislative/legislative-agenda-point-papers>



QUESTIONS?

Legion Legislative

▶ QR Code?

