

October 28, 2026

WEEKLY GRASSROOTS NEWSLETTER

Election Day Is Less Than a Week Away

Election Day is Tuesday, November 3rd, which means the time to make your plan to vote is now. If you have not voted yet, consider voting early if your state allows it. Many states offer early in-person or mail-in voting, so check with your state and local election office for the options and deadlines near you. If early voting is not an option for you, make your plan to head to the polls on Tuesday. Know your polling location, check your hours, and bring any required identification.

Voting Resources

- Learn about early voting options: How to vote in the United States | Vote.gov
- Have a nonpartisan voting question or need to check your registration? Register to vote in your state | Vote.gov

For more information on the American Legion's Get Out the Vote program, visit legion.org/advocacy/get-out-the-vote.

The American Legion appreciates your advocacy efforts. Visit the Action Center to quickly email a letter of support to your members of Congress. Remember to report any recent meetings or calls to help highlight the impact of Legion advocacy here.

IN THE NEWS

PENTAGON BANS TROOPS FROM BETTING USING INSIDER INFORMATION

This article's original publication can be found here

The new prohibition bars Defense Department personnel from using classified and unclassified info to gamble on prediction markets.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth is banning troops and Defense Department personnel from using "nonpublic information" to bet on online prediction markets. His directive, which warns of criminal prosecution if caught, said that such bets could give other nations or groups "a signal."

Hegseth announced the ban this past week in a memo titled "Do Not Compromise Military Operations for Personal Financial Gain." The directive bars department members — civilian staff or uniformed troops — from using insider information from the military to make bets on predictive markets such as Kalshi and Polymarket, no matter if the information is classified or unclassified. It is not an outright ban on betting on predictive markets, but specifically warns of security risks tied to using military information in these cases.

"Our enemies watch movements in these markets. When an American Service member, intelligence professional, or other Department civilian engages in a financial transaction on a military outcome, they create a signal," Hegseth wrote in the memo. "That signal can be aggregated, correlated, and exploited by hostile foreign intelligence services to anticipate our movements, targets, and timing."

The Oct. 20 memo was first reported on by CBS News. According to the memo, violating the order could result in disciplinary action, either under the Uniform Code of Military Justice or federal law.

The memo notes that having specific financial stakes in the outcome of military operations can "warp" someone's judgment.

It's not clear what prompted Hegseth to give the directive now, but it comes after several high-stakes bets around U.S. military operations earlier this year. In April, a Special Forces soldier was arrested and indicted by federal authorities for allegedly betting on when U.S. forces would attack Venezuela. Master Sgt. Gannon Ken Van Dyke was accused of using his knowledge in the planning of the raid to place roughly $33,000 in bets on the timing of the attack on a prediction market, which resulted in more than $400,000 in winnings.

In August, the Anti-Corruption Data Collective released a report noting that dozens of accounts made $8 million in military-related bets on Polymarket. The collective noted similar security concerns to what Hegseth cited, saying that “Because every Polymarket trade is visible on a public blockchain in real time, an insider betting on confidential military information is effectively broadcasting that information to foreign adversaries.”

RUSSIA BUILDS POWERFUL NEW RADAR AS SURVEILLANCE CONTEST WITH NATO HEATS UP

This article’s original publication can be found here

KHERSON, Ukraine (AP) — A planned six-day ceasefire in and around a Russian-occupied city in southern Ukraine held for its first day and night, officials said Wednesday, but Moscow and Kyiv continued to batter each other elsewhere.

The localized truce in the devastated southern city of Oleshky began Tuesday and is due to last through Sunday as a humanitarian operation races to get urgently needed food and medicine to about 2,000 remaining residents, as well as evacuate those who want to leave.

If the ceasefire holds, it will be the first time since Russia’s invasion of its neighbor more than 4 ½ years ago that the two sides have observed a significant truce. Previous attempts to stop the fighting have either failed to take hold or quickly unraveled amid deep mistrust.

A U.S. representative will join the Oleshky mission, a Ukrainian official says

A representative from the United States will join civilian officials from Russia and Ukraine when they go into Oleshky, Ukraine’s lead negotiator for the aid mission said.

“As soon as the road (into Oleshky) is de-mined and the humanitarian cargo is delivered there, representatives of three countries — Ukraine, the United States, and the Russian Federation — will be present on the spot,” Ukrainian Ombudsman Dmytro Lubinets said.

Evacuated residents will be free to choose between Ukraine and Russia as their destination, he said in an interview with Ukraine’s private 1+1 television.

Authorities will try to ensure that aid will continue flowing into Oleshky for anyone who wants to remain, he said.

Russia and Ukraine thank Melania Trump

Negotiators involved in the aid mission said doctors, medicines, food supplies and water would be sent to Oleshky before any evacuation corridors are opened.

Russia’s occupying forces impose strict limits on who can enter Oleshky, and there was no news on how the humanitarian operation was unfolding.

Russia’s ombudsperson Yana Lantratova and Lubinets, Ukraine's ombudsperson, both said Wednesday there had been no ceasefire violations in Oleshky for 30 hours.

The plight of the city in Ukraine's southern Kherson region caught the attention of U.S. first lady Melania Trump, and the White House said she brokered the humanitarian mission.

Pope Leo XIV also spoke this month with presidents Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine and Vladimir Putin of Russia, urging them to allow humanitarian aid into Oleshky and the safe evacuation of civilians, the Vatican said.

Both Ukrainian and Russian officials, eager to win U.S. President Donald Trump’s approval as he pushes for an elusive peace settlement, thanked Melania Trump for her role.

U.S. awaits Middle East events before setting date for Russia-Ukraine talks

The ceasefire coincided with U.S.-led plans to bring Moscow and Kyiv officials back to the table next month for technical talks on how to move forward on ending the war, even though neither side shows signs of backing down from their key demands.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha, speaking in Helsinki on Wednesday, said Kyiv “will never accept any formula at the cost of our sovereignty or territorial integrity.”

Talks between delegations from Ukraine, Russia and the United States that are expected to take place in Abu Dhabi in November have not yet been scheduled because Washington is awaiting developments in the Middle East, Zelenskyy told reporters in remarks Tuesday that were embargoed until Wednesday.

Zelenskyy said the leaders of Finland and Norway, who spoke to Putin by phone Tuesday, told him that Russia is “serious” about discussing steps to de-escalate the war.

The Ukrainian president said these could include a pause in attacks targeting energy infrastructure and commercial sea traffic, further prisoner exchanges, and a discussion of formats for possible meetings at leaders' level.

The call to the Kremlin by Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre and Finnish President Alexander Stubb was surprising. European countries have sought to diplomatically isolate the Russian leader since the invasion.

But since Putin’s summit with Trump in Alaska last year, Zelenskyy noted, European governments have quietly resumed contacts with Moscow at the level of national security advisers and between intelligence agencies.

Continue Reading here

DID YOU KNOW

VA AWARDS RECORD HIGH $106.5M IN CEMETERY GRANTS IN FY 26

This article's original publication can be found here

The Department of Veterans Affairs in fiscal year 2026 awarded to 21 cemeteries in U.S. states, territories and tribal nations a record-high $106.5 million in grants – the most single-year funding since the Veterans Cemetery Grant Program started in 1980.

Grants typically fund construction of new Veterans cemeteries and expansion of existing ones, improvements needed to maintain interments as well as operations and maintenance projects.

Since 1980, VA has awarded grants totaling more than $1.2 billion to more than 120 cemeteries in 47 states, 14 tribal nations and three territories (Guam, Saipan and Puerto Rico). These grants help ensure more than 94% of all Veterans living in the United States have access to a Veterans cemetery within 75 miles of their home.

"Every VA cemetery grant reflects our commitment to honor the lives of those who served our nation," said **VA Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs Sam Brown**. "Under President Trump's leadership, the Department of Veterans Affairs is strengthening its partnerships with states, territories and tribal nations to ensure Veterans and their families have local access to the burial benefits they earned."

The following cemetery grants were awarded in FY2026:

- $18,094,445 for the establishment of Alabama Veterans Memorial Cemetery-North in Huntsville. Additionally, VA will reimburse the cost of fabrication and delivery of pre-placed crypts up to $875,706.
- $283,200 for the expansion of Alabama State Veterans Memorial Cemetery at Spanish Fort in Spanish Fort.
- $3,109,391 for the expansion of Southern Arizona Veterans' Memorial Cemetery in Sierra Vista.
- $584,250 for the expansion of Connecticut State Veterans Cemetery in Middletown.
- $13,610,908 for the establishment of the Georgia Memorial Veterans Cemetery at Augusta. Additionally, VA will reimburse the cost of fabrication and delivery of pre-placed crypts up to $2,155,262.
- $6,132,225 for the operation and maintenance of East Hawaii Veterans Cemetery-2 in Hilo, Hawaii.
- $1,358,525 for the expansion of the Iowa Veterans Cemetery in Adel.

- $4,591,546 for the expansion of Missouri State Veterans Cemetery at Springfield Additionally, VA will also reimburse the state for the cost of fabrication and delivery of pre-placed crypts up to $1,472,850.
- $3,506,037 for the establishment of Rota Veterans Cemetery in Rota, Northern Mariana Islands. Additionally, VA will reimburse the cost of fabrication and delivery of pre-placed crypts up to $269,300.
- $3,110,550 for the establishment of Tinian Veterans Cemetery in Tinian, Northern Mariana Islands. Additionally, VA will reimburse the cost of fabrication and delivery of pre-placed crypts up to $269,300.
- $3,739,379 for the establishment of the Burgess-Oocumma Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Cherokee, North Carolina.
- $2,613,394 for the expansion of Eastern Carolina State Veterans Cemetery in Goldsboro, North Carolina. Additionally, VA will reimburse the cost of fabrication and delivery of pre-placed crypts up to $2,878.
- $1,457,620 for the expansion of Western Carolina State Veterans Cemetery in Black Mountain, North Carolina.
- $16,711,624 for the establishment of Carlsbad State Veterans Cemetery in Carlsbad, New Mexico. Additionally, VA will reimburse the cost of fabrication and delivery of pre-placed crypts up to $625,670.
- $963,433 for the expansion of South Dakota Veterans Cemetery in Sioux Falls.
- $7,073,800 for the establishment of Upper Cumberland Tennessee State Veterans Cemetery in Upper Cumberland, Tennessee.
- $14,740,955 for the establishment of Northern Utah Veterans Cemetery in Washington Terrace, Utah. Additionally, VA will reimburse the cost of fabrication and delivery of pre-placed crypts up to $920,700.
- $1,911,000 for the expansion of the Utah Veterans Cemetery and Memorial Park in Bluffdale.
- $243,467 for the expansion of Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery in Dublin, Virginia.
- $1,504,104 for the operations and maintenance of Washington State Veterans Cemetery in Medical Lake.
- $1,208,114 for the expansion of Northern Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Spooner, Wisconsin. Additionally, VA will reimburse the cost of fabrication and delivery of pre-placed crypts up to $330,000.

Legionnaire of the Week

To recognize the weekly accomplishments of our Legionnaires, we 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.

ROBERT HUFF, DEPARTMENT OF OREGON

Robert, thank you for your continued advocacy for our nation's veterans! We are honored to recognize your grassroots efforts on behalf of The American Legion.

Robert recently participated in a meeting with Congressman Cliff Bentz and five veterans from Southern Oregon to discuss key national issues affecting veterans and military personnel.

During the meeting, Robert advocated for the *Take Care of America's Veterans Act (TCAVA)*, emphasizing the importance of passing the legislation and requesting Congressman Bentz's support. He highlighted his ongoing outreach to the congressman's office and discussed the Major Richard Star Act, as well as concerns surrounding VA disability ratings for sleep apnea and tinnitus.

Thank you, Robert, for your dedication to ensuring our nation's veterans have a strong voice in Congress!

TOP STATES FOR GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY FOR THE WEEK:

Tennessee	**231**
Kansas	**215**
Wisconsin	**172**
New York	**78**
Florida	**52**

THE CLOCK IS TICKING ON THE 119TH CONGRESS

Time is running out. The 119th Congress is approaching its final stretch, and that means every day counts for the legislation our veterans depend on. Now is the time to push your representatives to act on the American Legion's legislative priorities before this session ends. Do not let these bills die on the table. Contact your Members of Congress, make calls, send letters, and make your voice heard.

Want to know exactly what to push for? The 119th Congress, 2nd Session Legislative Priorities materials are available now. View and download them on the Legion website here.

OTHER GRASSROOTS INFORMATION

Strengthen advocacy in your state. Encourage members to connect with their elected officials. Find your representatives here.

Grow your post's reach. Not yet registered? Sign up using the link here and add your voice to the movement

Prepare for your next Capitol Hill meeting. The *10 Tips for a Successful Meeting on Capitol Hill* and the *Legislative Meeting Worksheet* are ready to download on the Legislative Advocacy Resources & Toolkit page on The American Legion website.

Get personalized training. Legislative Division staff can deliver Grassroots Training tailored to your department's needs. Reach out at grassroots@legion.org to schedule a session.

Stay informed on key legislation. Track bills and The American Legion's positions anytime in the Key Legislation section on VoterVoice.

Ready to take action? Register for alerts at *votervoice.net/AmericanLegion/Register*

MAKE THE CALL. MAKE THE VISIT. MAKE IT COUNT.

The House of Representatives and the Senate are both now in recess and will return on November 9th. In the meantime, we encourage all Legionnaires to schedule a meeting or call with your Member of Congress. And on November 3rd, "Get Out the Vote" and make your voice heard at the ballot box this election season.

View The American Legion Legislative Handbook Here