



October 17, 2025
WEEKLY GRASSROOTS NEWSLETTER

This week, we are asking Legionnaires to contact Congress to urge them to pass the *Pay Our Troops Act!* This legislation ensures that members of the Armed Services will be paid in the event of a government shutdown.

The American Legion appreciates 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.

Take Our Government Shutdown Impact Survey!

As Congress continues to debate federal funding, we know the government shutdown is creating real challenges for veterans, servicemembers, families, and communities across the country. The results will help us advocate more effectively for those feeling the effects of the shutdown. You can find the link to our anonymous survey [here](#).

NEED TO FIND YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS?

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

TOP GRASSROOTS DEPARTMENTS

Kansas	455
Wisconsin	346
New York	254
Tennessee	228
Florida	201

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>

GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN INFORMATION

The American Legion's Government Affairs office is working diligently to keep the Legion Family updated on news related to the government shutdown, which has been in effect since October 1. The most recent vote in the Senate on 10/16 failed 51-45.

On October 14th, The American Legion participated in a joint press conference with other MSO/VSOs to call on Congress to open government and pass the Pay Our Troops Act. You can watch Executive Director Mario Marquez's remarks [here](#).

Click [here](#) to watch National Commander Dan Wiley discuss the impact of the shutdown.

You can visit the Department of Veterans Affairs website to view the VA contingency plan [here](#). It breaks down what services are impacted by the shutdown, as well as what services are operating as normal.



VETERANS FIELD GUIDE TO GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN



The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is committed to provide quality, consistent care and services to Veterans, families, Caregivers, and Survivors. VA's mission allows no exception to this standard even when operations are limited by the absence of appropriations (commonly known as a "Government shutdown").



SERVICES TO VETERANS NOT IMPACTED:



VA Medical Centers, Outpatient Clinics, and Vet Centers will be open as usual and providing all services.



VA benefits will continue to be processed and delivered, including compensation, pension, education, and housing benefits.



Burials will continue at VA national cemeteries. Applications for headstones, markers, and burial benefits processing will continue.



The Board of Veterans' Appeals will continue decisions on Veterans' cases.



Call Centers: VA's primary call center (1-800-MyVA411) and the Veterans Crisis Line (Dial 988, Press 1) will remain open 24/7.



Suicide prevention programs, homelessness services, and caregiver support will continue.



SERVICES TO VETERANS IMPACTED:



VA will cease providing transition program assistance and career counseling.



Call Centers: VA's GI Bill (1-888-GIBILL-1) and National Cemetery Applicant Assistance (1-800-697-6947) hotlines will be closed.



VA benefits regional offices will be closed.



Public Affairs and outreach to Veterans will cease, including social media, VetResources emails, and responses to press inquiries.



No grounds maintenance or placement of permanent headstones at VA cemeteries. Applications for pre-need burial at VA cemeteries will not be processed. No printing of new Presidential Memorial Certificates.



No outreach to state, county, tribal, municipal, faith-based, and community-based partners by VA Central Office.



HAVE A QUESTION? CALL US!

The one number all Veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors can use to access VA resources 24 hours-a-day, 365 days-a-year.
1-800-MYVA411 (1-800-698-2411)

In the event of a prolonged shutdown, VA will continue to review and update its plan in conjunction with the applicable legal requirements and circumstances. Please visit www.whitehouse.gov/omb/ or www.VA.gov for updated information.




U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Download the VA Welcome Kit www.va.gov/welcome-kit/
Subscribe to #VetResources www.va.gov/vetresources/
Veterans Crisis Line: Dial 988, then Press 1
Call 1-800-MyVA411 (1-800-698-2411) or visit <https://www.va.gov/contact-us/>

<https://department.va.gov/contingency-planning/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2025/09/Veteran-Field-Guide-Govt-Shutdown.pdf>

THE AMERICAN LEGION AND VETERANS' GROUPS URGE CONGRESS TO PASS THE PAY OUR TROOPS ACT

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

Leaders from The American Legion and several Veterans organizations gathered in Washington, D.C., on Oct. 14 to demand that Congress pass the Pay Our Troops Act and end the ongoing government shutdown. Hosted by Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), the press conference brought together a coalition of advocates representing millions of Service Members, Veterans, and Military Families across the country.

Dr. Kyleanne Hunter, a Marine Corps Veteran and CEO of IAVA, said the shutdown is creating financial hardship and anxiety for troops and their families. She explained that while some VA benefits continue, many Veterans are experiencing delayed payments and difficulty reaching GI Bill hotlines or rescheduling appointments. Hunter urged lawmakers to deliver a permanent solution so that military pay isn't jeopardized during political disputes.

"Even before the shutdown began, nearly one in four active duty Service Members face food insecurity," Hunter said. "Nearly half of our active duty Service Members are living paycheck to paycheck, and putting them in a situation where they are facing uncertainty is not good for our national security."

The American Legion's Executive Director of Government Affairs, Mario Marquez, who previously served as a senior enlisted Marine leader, said he has seen firsthand how shutdowns hurt morale and readiness.

"It was the people who paid the price for political failure," Marquez said. "Congress must protect those who protect us. When lawmakers fail to keep their promises, they fail the very people who make this nation work."

Marquez described how shutdowns disrupt essential military programs and delay support services for Veterans. He pointed out that furloughs and pay delays can have lasting impacts on morale, readiness, and even mental health. The American Legion, representing 2.5 million members of the Legion family, stands with other organizations calling on lawmakers to "reopen the government and pass legislation to pay our troops so we never have to do this again."

The coalition emphasized that temporary measures allowing pay to continue are not enough. Tom Porter of Blue Star Families said that while 27 organizations recently urged Congress to act, Military Families continue to face uncertainty.

"Missing a payday means missing rent, missing meals, missing doctor visits," he said. "This isn't a bureaucratic inconvenience. It's a direct assault on the financial stability of those who sacrifice so much for this country."

The shutdown has also affected education benefits. Student Veterans of America (SVA) warned that the closure of the GI Bill hotline and furlough of counselors are leaving student Veterans without guidance or support. Many rely on these services to resolve

payment issues, verify enrollment, and maintain housing while in school. Delays in these benefits could force some to drop classes or face housing insecurity.

Other speakers included representatives from the Disabled American Veterans (DAV), Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS), the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA), and the National Military Family Association (NMFA). Each shared the same message: Service Members and their families should not be caught in the crossfire of partisan gridlock.

Candace Wheeler of TAPS explained that even though troops report for duty, many may do so without pay. “Although the administration has provided a temporary solution, it’s not sustainable,” she said. “Our military and surviving families must not be caught in the crosshairs of this budget process.”

NMFA’s Besa Pinchotti said it’s time for America to take military pay off the political table entirely. “We’ve allowed military pay to be weaponized as a bargaining chip,” she said. “Every time our nation disagrees, our troops end up holding the bill.”

With bipartisan support reportedly growing for the Pay Our Troops Act, advocates are calling on lawmakers to move quickly. The bill would guarantee that all active-duty, reserve, and National Guard personnel continue to receive pay during any lapse in government funding.

“Caring for America’s Veterans and Service Members should not be a partisan issue,” said DAV’s Scott Hogan. “Keeping our promise to Veterans and their families should unite every lawmaker in Washington.”

GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN IMPACTING VETERANS AFFAIRS. **DETAILS ON BENEFITS, MEDICAL CARE, MORE**

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

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs’ services are limited as thousands of its employees have been furloughed during the ongoing government shutdown.

The agency, which oversees health care and other benefits for veterans, is not operating as usual due to a lapse in federal funding appropriations.

The shutdown entered its 14th day on Oct. 14 as lawmakers remained at an impasse over spending proposals.

Some VA services, including compensation and pension benefits, are not impacted. Other areas, like transition program assistance, have ceased during the shutdown.

VA Secretary Doug Collins told Georgia radio station AccessWDUN on Oct. 10 that most of the affected services have to do with the agency's outreach efforts.

"Good news is we operate off of an advanced appropriation," Collins said. "Which means our hospitals, our clinics, disability benefits, those kinds of things are already pre-funded."

Is the VA still open during shutdown? See impacted services

Roughly 15,000 of the VA's more than 460,000 employees have been furloughed during the shutdown, according to the agency's contingency plan.

As a result, the following services are **not** available during the government shutdown:

- Transition program assistance and career counseling
- Call centers:
 - VA's GI Bill hotline (1-888-GIBILL-1) and Memorial Products Applicant Assistance unit (1-800-697-6947)
- VA benefits regional offices are closed
- Public Affairs and unfunded outreach to veterans, including social media, VetResources emails and responses to press inquiries
- Grounds maintenance or placement of permanent headstones at VA cemeteries
- Applications for pre-need burial at VA cemeteries
- Printing of new Presidential Memorial Certificates
- VA Central Office outreach to state, county, tribal, municipal, faith-based and community-based partners

Are VA benefits still going out during the government shutdown?

Yes, VA benefits, including compensation and pension payments, are still going out.

The following VA services are still available and operating as usual despite the shutdown:

- VA Medical Centers, Outpatient Clinics and Vet Centers
- VA benefits, including compensation, pension, education and housing benefits
- Burials at VA national cemeteries, applications for headstones, markers and burial benefits
- The Board of Veterans' Appeals is continuing decisions on veterans' cases
- Call Centers:
 - VA's primary call center (1-800-MyVA411) and the Veterans Crisis Line (Dial 988, Press 1)
 - The VA Benefit Hotline (1-800-827-1000)
 - The National Cemetery Scheduling Office (1-800-535-1117)

- Suicide prevention programs, homelessness services and caregiver support

Congress members criticize VA's shutdown response; Collins blames Democrats

Several members of the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees have criticized Collins and the VA's response to the shutdown.

The Oct. 7 [letter](#), which was signed by, among others, House Veterans' Affairs Committee Ranking Member Mark Takano (D-CA) and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Ranking Member Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), asked Collins to reverse what the lawmakers called the "weaponization" of the shutdown.

The letter said the VA has not responded to communications from members of Congress, including inquiries from veteran constituents.

According to the letter, the VA's Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs said that it cannot respond to communications from members of Congress during the shutdown. The lawmakers say this claim is misleading, adding that the office should be able to respond to communications by utilizing non-furloughed employees or prioritizing carryover funding at its disposal.

"The fact that VA has chosen not to prioritize communication with Congress on policy matters is clearly a leadership decision and a direct affront to our constitutional duty to oversee the work of the Department," the letter says.

Collins, meanwhile, has repeatedly blamed Democrats for the shutdown. In an [op-ed](#) for The Hill published on Oct. 10, three days after the congressional letter addressed to him was released, Collins called the actions of Congressional Democrats "one of the biggest displays of hypocrisy in recent history."

"Democrats in Congress have accused the Trump Administration of destroying the Department of Veterans Affairs, cutting benefits and services, and hurting veterans along the way," he wrote. "There is no truth to their claims, of course."

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.

Charles Young, Wisconsin

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

This month, Charles attended a veteran round table meeting held by Congressman Scott Fitzgerald. There were 16 veterans present, with representation from members of The American Legion, VFW, DAV, and Vietnam Veterans of America. The services represented at the discussion were Army, Women's Army Corps, Navy, Air Force, and Marines. This discussion was focused on veteran issues that the Congressman can hopefully address and legislation to support regarding these issues.

Thank you, Charles, 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!

10 Tips for a Successful Meeting on Capitol Hill and the *Legislative Meeting Worksheet* are now available for viewing and download on The Legion's website. You can find them and other legislative resources on the [Legislative Advocacy Resources & Toolkit page](#).

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 10/17, there are no hearings scheduled.

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](#)