AMERICAN LEGION

LEGISLATIVE WEEKLY

June 6, 2025

WEEKLY GRASSROOTS NEWSLETTER

This week, we are asking Legionnaires to contact Congress to request support for *House Bill 1815!*. This bill will provide a one-time bailout for veteran homeowners who are struggling to make their mortgage payments and are in delinquent status, facing foreclosure or a short sale of their property. If implemented, this bill will help veterans maintain homeownership and financial stability, enhance the effectiveness of the VA's housing assistance, and contribute to the overall market stability by reducing foreclosure rates. *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.

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.

VA: ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORD EFFORT GETS A BOOST

This article's original publication can be found here

The White House has requested $134.6 billion in discretionary spending for the Department of Veterans Affairs in fiscal 2026, a 4.1 percent increase over the current spending level, according to budget documents released Friday.

The VA received $129.2 billion in discretionary spending for the current fiscal year, according to administration figures.

When including the Toxic Exposures Fund, a pool of mandatory funding meant to cover costs associated with the toxic exposure law known as the PACT Act (PL 117-168) which expanded health care for millions of veterans, the total for the current fiscal year is $159.7 billion, and the fiscal 2026 request is for $187.2 billion, a 17.3 percent increase.

These figures do not include all mandatory spending by the department, which makes up a significant portion of the VA's overall budget.

The spending details were included in a so-called skinny budget sent to Congress by the Office of Management and Budget, a paired-down version of the voluminous, more detailed budget request that is expected later this month.

According to the documents, the administration's request for the VA includes an additional $3.3 billion for medical care — $1.1 billion of which would be used to help address homelessness among veterans via rental assistance and augmenting the VA's support services.

An additional $2.2 billion is intended to keep the VA's Electronic Health Record Modernization program moving. The rollout of the new records system has bogged down the VA for years and has been plagued by delays, cost overruns and operational issues. The effort was first announced in 2018.

The request would also cut $493 million for IT systems across the department. According to the budget documents, President Donald Trump has directed the Department of Government Efficiency to work with the VA in improving its IT systems. As part of that process, the procurement of any new systems would be paused until DOGE employees have reviewed the situation at the VA.

And the new budget would cut $37 million from the VA's general administration funds as a way to target diversity, equity and inclusion programs within the agency and, according to the documents, reduce bureaucratic overhead.

GOP PLAN PROVIDES $453 BILLION FOR VA PROGRAMS, BENEFITS NEXT YEAR

This article's original publication can be found here

House Republicans unveiled plans Wednesday for a $453 billion Department of Veterans Affairs budget next fiscal year, with a dramatic increase in mandatory health care and benefits funding but only a 3% boost in discretionary veteran program spending.

The proposal also includes a host of controversial social items that drew immediate condemnation from Democratic lawmakers who promised a fight over the measure.

“This bill needlessly fixates on keeping guns in the hands of those who are potentially a danger to themselves or others, and restricts reproductive rights, and [includes] other cruel and pointless policy restrictions,” Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz, D-Fla., said in a statement.

“I cannot tell those currently serving and those who defended our nation that this is the best we can do.”

The budget plan is expected to be voted on by a House Appropriations Committee panel on Thursday morning. Republican lawmakers praised the proposal as “maintaining our commitment to the well-being of both service members and veterans.”

The appropriations bill represents an $83 billion boost from Congress’ approved spending plan for VA in fiscal 2025. That’s an increase of more than 22%, but nearly all of that boost is tied up in mandatory funding related to medical programs and veterans payouts.

Discretionary funding — money for new program starts and support services — would rise to about $134 billion, up about 4% but about $1 billion less than what the White House requested in its fiscal 2026 budget plan.

Almost all of that difference came in the VA Electronic Health Record Modernization initiative account. Spending for the project would double from this year's spending under the plan, to about $2.5 billion. But that is nearly $1 billion less than what the White House requested.

Lawmakers have been skeptical of the 10-year, $16 billion project which began during President Donald Trump's first term in office. The effort to modernize health records has been marked by numerous complications and delays, but VA Secretary Doug Collins has promised to restart the effort in coming months.

The legislation also includes provisions to block VA from providing abortions or abortion-related counseling at department medical centers — a priority of the previous administration — and prohibit vaccination requirements for any department health care personnel.

Republicans also included language that would bar the department from reporting veterans found financially incompetent from being reported to the National Instant Background Check System.

Republicans have called it an unnecessary infringement of Second Amendment rights. Democrats have criticized the provision as undermining gun safety efforts.

The VA funding bill also includes about $18 billion for military construction projects, an increase of about 3% from fiscal 2025. That includes $830 million for child development centers and barracks improvements.

The budget plan is expected to advance Thursday since Republicans control the majority in both chambers of Congress. However, any funding plan would need some level of bipartisan support to advance in the Senate, because of filibuster rules there.

The VA budget plan is unlikely to be signed into law until the entire fiscal 2026 funding plan for the federal government is agreed upon by congressional leaders. Negotiations for that are expected to last through the summer.

Veterans Affairs planners have seen regular budget increases annually for more than 20 years, even amid periodic 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.

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.

Steve Fosness, Minnesota

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

This week, Steve met Representative Brad Finstad at the grand opening of the Bravo Zulu House in Martin County, Minnesota. The Congressman presented the Executive Director of Trinity Sober Homes and the Bravo Zulu House with a flag that was flown over the Capitol. He also addressed the crowd. Steve discussed veteran PTSD and chemical/alcohol dependency leading to veteran suicide with the Congressman.

Thank you, Steve, 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 on ***The Veteran's Role in Supporting the Military?*** Check out our information papers in the Legislative Toolkit. 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 6/6, the following hearings are scheduled:

- Tuesday, June 10, 10:00 AM: House Committee on Armed Services, Full Committee Hearing -- "*U.S. Military Posture and National Security Challenges in the Greater Middle East and Africa"*
- Wednesday, June 11, 10:00 AM: House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity Legislative Hearing (**Legion Staff testifying**)
- Wednesday, June 11, 10:00 AM: House Committee on Armed Services, Full Committee Hearing -- "*Department of the Navy Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Request"*
- Wednesday, June 11, 2:15 PM: House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations Legislative Hearing (**Legion Staff testifying**)

- Wednesday, June 11, 3:30 PM: House Committee on Armed Services, Subcommittee on Tactical Air and Land Forces Hearing -- "*Army Munition Industrial Base Modernization"*
- Thursday, June 12, 9:30 AM: Senate Committee on Armed Services, Full Committee Hearing -- "*OPEN/CLOSED: To Receive Testimony on the Posture of United States Central Command in Review of the Defense Authorization Request for Fiscal Year 2026 and the Future Years Defense Program"*
- Thursday, June 12, 10:00 AM: House Committee on Armed Services, Full Committee Hearing -- "*Department of Defense Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Request"*
- Thursday, June 12, 2:15 PM: House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, Subcommittee on Health Legislative Hearing (**Legion Staff testifying**)

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