AMERICAN LEGION

LEGISLATIVE WEEKLY

September 19, 2025

WEEKLY GRASSROOTS NEWSLETTER

This week, we are asking Legionnaires to contact Congress to request support for the *Shipbuilding and Harbor Infrastructure for Prosperity and Security (SHIPS) Act!* This legislation aims to improve the maritime security of the United States. Our members served the nation in wartime and know the dangers of poor readiness. We cannot let the burden of these security failures fall on our service members. *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.

NEED TO FIND YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS?

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

TOP GRASSROOTS DEPARTMENTS

Wisconsin	**162**
Kansas	**143**
Tennessee	**109**
West Virginia	**102**
New York	**94**

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

HOUSE PASSES A BILL TO AVOID A PARTIAL GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN, BUT PROSPECTS IN THE SENATE LOOK DIM

This article's original publication can be found here

The House on Friday passed a short-term spending bill to extend government funding for seven weeks and avoid a partial government shutdown on Oct. 1, but prospects looked dimmer in the Senate, where the two parties show no signs of budging on the matter.

The bill would generally continue existing funding levels through Nov. 21. Democratic leaders are adamantly opposed and are threatening a government shutdown if Republicans don't let them have a say on the measure, as some Democratic support will be needed to get a bill to President Donald Trump's desk for his signature.

The vote was 217-212.

House Speaker Mike Johnson of Louisiana had few votes to spare as he sought to persuade fellow Republicans to vote for the funding patch, something many in his conference have routinely opposed in past budget fights. But this time, GOP members see a chance to portray the Democrats as responsible for a shutdown.

"We were very careful. We put no partisan measures in this. There's no poison pills. None of that," Johnson said leading up to the vote.

In a sign the vote could be close, Trump weighed in, urging House Republicans to pass the bill and put the burden on Democrats to oppose it. GOP leaders often need Trump's help to win over holdouts on legislation.

"Every House Republican should UNIFY, and VOTE YES!" Trump said on his social media site.

Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries, D-N.Y., said that in opposing the continuing resolution, Democrats were working to protect the health care of the American people. He said that with Republicans controlling the White House and both branches of Congress, "Republicans will own a government shutdown. Period. Full stop."

The House vote now sends the bill to the Senate where Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., said the Senate will vote on the measure along with a dueling Democratic proposal. But neither is expected to win the 60 votes necessary to advance.

Senators could then potentially leave town until Sept. 29 — one day before the shutdown deadline. The Senate has a scheduled recess next week because of Rosh Hashana, the Jewish new year.

The Democratic proposal would extend enhanced health insurance subsidies set to expire at the end of the year, plus reverse Medicaid cuts that were included in Republicans' big tax breaks and spending cuts bill enacted earlier this year.

"The American people will look at what Republicans are doing, look at what Democrats are doing, and it will be clear that public sentiment will be on our side," said Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer of New York, who has repeatedly threatened a shutdown if health care isn't addressed.

Democrats on both sides of the Capitol are watching Schumer closely after his last-minute decision in March to vote with Republicans to keep the government open. Schumer argued then that a shutdown would be damaging and would give Trump and his White House freedom to make more government cuts. Many on the left revolted, with some advocates calling for his resignation.

The vote in the spring also caused a temporary schism with Jeffries, who opposed that particular GOP spending bill and said he would not be "complicit" with Schumer's vote.

The two Democratic leaders now say they are united, and Schumer says things have changed since March. The public is more wary of Trump and Republicans, Schumer says, after the passage of Medicaid cuts.

Most Democrats appear to be backing Schumer's demand that there be negotiations on the bill — and support his threats of a shutdown, even as it is unclear how they would get out of it.

"Look, the president said really boldly, don't even talk to Democrats. Unless he's forgotten that you need a supermajority to pass a budget in the Senate, that's obviously his signal he wants a shutdown," said Sen. Tammy Baldwin, D-Wis.

While the Democratic measure to fund the government has no chance of passage Friday, it does give Democrats a way to show voters their focus on cutting health care costs.

"There are some thing we have to address. The health insurance, ACA, is going to hammer millions of people in the country, including in red states," said Sen. Angus King, I-Maine. "To me, that can't be put off."

Republicans say the blame would be clearly on the other side if they can't pass a bill — and are using Schumer's previous arguments against shutdowns against him.

Sen. John Barrasso, the No. 2 Republican in the Senate, said: "Senator Schumer himself said that passing a clean CR will avert a harmful and unnecessary shutdown.

Now he wants to cause a harmful and unnecessary shutdown."

LAWMAKERS SEEK TO GUARANTEE TROOP PAY IN CASE OF A GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

This article's original publication can be found here

The Pay Our Troops Act would guarantee servicemembers get paid if Congress fails to pass federal funding legislation for the 2026 fiscal year by the end of the month.

Lawmakers are scrambling to ensure troops, including members of the Coast Guard, continue to receive paychecks if congressional gridlock leads to a government shutdown on Oct. 1.

Rep. Jen Kiggans, R-Va., this week reintroduced the Pay Our Troops Act to guarantee service members get paid if Congress fails to pass federal funding legislation for the 2026 fiscal year by the end of the month.

"As a former Navy helicopter pilot, wife of a veteran and mom of a service member, I know firsthand the sacrifices military families make every single day," she said. "The last thing they should face is financial uncertainty caused by partisan gridlock."

Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., plans to bring a stopgap spending bill to the House floor this week to fund the government through Nov. 21, but Democrats have said they will oppose the measure unless it includes an extension of Affordable Care Act tax breaks.

Republicans will need the votes of at least seven Democrats to pass the legislation in the Senate and will likely need the backing of some Democrats to pass it in the House, where some fiscal conservatives are bound to withhold their support.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., on Wednesday accused Republicans of refusing to work with Democrats and said his party will soon release its own proposal for a short-term funding extension.

The standoff has raised fears of a shutdown that would require service members to report for duty but not get paid.

Kiggans' legislation, which has dozens of co-sponsors, would direct that existing, unappropriated U.S. Treasury funds be used to continue paying members of the armed forces, both active and reserve duty, as well as the Coast Guard. The funds would also pay civilian employees at the Department of Defense and Department of Homeland Security, and contractors who directly support service members.

Multiple military and veterans organizations have endorsed the bill, describing it as a "common-sense, bipartisan" measure that protects military personnel from the political uncertainty of government shutdowns.

"Our military is willing to do their job for the country, which often puts their lives at risk," said Kathy Roth-Douquet, the CEO of the nonprofit Blue Star Families. "We just ask that Congress do their job to keep the government running and get us paid."

The legislation would provide the same paycheck protections Congress gave service members shortly before the start of a 16-day government shutdown in 2013.

Troops were mostly unaffected during the last government shutdown in 2018-2019, but members of the Coast Guard worked without pay for more than a month because the service is operated by the Department of Homeland Security instead of the Defense Department.

Activists have warned that even one missed paycheck can put troops at serious financial risk. One in three military families has less than $3,000 in savings, according to Blue Star Families, and the Defense Department previously estimated that nearly one in four service members has trouble putting food on the table.

If Congress does not pass pay protections before a government shutdown takes effect, service members will receive back pay for any missed paychecks once federal funding resumes.

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.

Gerald Valle, Arizona

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

Gerald met with Congressman Greg Stanton's staff at his office in Mesa. They discussed HR 2605, HR 3151, HR 977, and HR 1423. He noted that the Congressman was one of the cosponsors of HR 1423, the Guard and Reserve GI Bill Parity Act. Gerald also discussed local events that the Congressman could get involved in, such as a Veterans' Town Hall and Resource Fair to discuss veterans' needs. He also scheduled a follow-up meeting for later in the month to discuss progress.

Thank you, Gerald, 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

There are **no** hearings scheduled for next week. Both chambers of Congress will be back in session on Monday, September 29.

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