



The Legislative Watch, 24 April 2015

IN THIS WEEK'S LEGISLATIVE WATCH (also [available on our website](#)):

[HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE TO TAKE UP MILITARY COMPENSATION AND RETIREMENT MODERNIZATION COMMISSION RETIREMENT RECOMMENDATIONS IN NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT \(NDAA\)](#)
[HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE BEGINS SUBCOMMITTEE MARKUPS FOR NDAA](#)
[SENATE VETERANS' AFFAIRS COMMITTEE HEARING ON FULFILLING THE PROMISE TO WOMEN VETERANS](#)
[SENATE VETERANS' AFFAIRS COMMITTEE HEARING ON VETERANS HEALTH AND SAFETY LEGISLATION](#)

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE TO TAKE UP MILITARY COMPENSATION AND RETIREMENT MODERNIZATION COMMISSION RETIREMENT RECOMMENDATIONS IN NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT (NDAA)

By Edgar Rodriguez, Director of Legislation and Government Relations

In a surprise move, House Armed Services Committee Chairman, Rep. Mac Thornberry (R-TX) announced this week that the House defense panel will take up the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission (MCRMC) retirement recommendations in this year's National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). The Senate has also stated that they will follow suit.

The proposed changes would change the current retirement model that requires service members to stay for a full 20-years before they can retire, and instead offers a 401K type plan that service members can take with them if they decide to leave before 20 years. Retirement pensions would still be available after 20 years, but would only be offered at a 40 percent rate as opposed to the current 50 percent rate. The proposed changes would not affect current service members or retirees. The defense panel stated that they would plan to have this retirement system in place by October 2017.

We at AUSN believe that drafting any of the MCRMC's recommendations into law this year is too rash of a move and puts the benefits of our future service members at risk. Instead, we believe more analysis on these MCRMC recommendations is needed and the House and Senate Armed Services Committees should wait until the possible impact of these recommendations is understood.

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE BEGINS SUBCOMMITTEE MARKUPS FOR NDAA

By Roza Kessaci, Legislative Intern

It was a busy week on Capitol Hill as the House Armed Services Committees completed their Subcommittee markups. Markups of course are when legislation is debated, amended, and written within a specific committee or subcommittee. All the subcommittees completed their markups as scheduled, with the exception of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee which primarily provides oversight responsibilities within the Committee and does not typically engage in the markup process.

The full Committee markup will be next week and is expected to be very contentious with the revelation that the Committee has decided to take up the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission (MCRMC) retirement recommendation in the bill.

SENATE VETERANS' AFFAIRS COMMITTEE HEARING ON FULFILLING THE PROMISE TO WOMEN VETERANS

By Jennifer Mamola, Legislative Intern

According to the VA, the number of women veterans using Veterans Health Administration (VHA) services increased by 80 percent between Fiscal Year 2003 and Fiscal Year 2012. Currently, over 635,000 women veterans are enrolled in the VA health care system, and over 400,000 actively use VA health care; more than double the number of women who used

VA health care in the year 2000 (160,000). The number of women veterans' patients under 35 years of age has increased 120 percent between FY 2003 and FY 2013. New providers with expertise in women's health are needed.

More than half of women veterans under VA care are service disabled, and have sought VA care following military service and have targeted health care needs. The VA struggles in welcoming women and caring for them, even though they planned to implement a five-year plan in 2008 ensuring comprehensive primary care for women.

Key recommendations to be implemented by next year include: every VA center employ a gynecologist, include IT solutions directly impacting women's health, develop standards to ensure VA health care facility meets needs of women veterans, authorize child-care services as a permanent program, develop gender-sensitive mental health programs for women veterans, increase number of safe transitional and supportive beds designated for women veterans with dependent family members, and conduct a GAO study on VA's ability to meet these needs and others.

SENATE VETERANS' AFFAIRS COMMITTEE HEARING ON VETERANS HEALTH AND SAFETY LEGISLATION

By Adam Bernstein, Legislative Intern

The House Veterans Affairs Committee's Subcommittee on Health met on April 23 to discuss the language of several bills with Veterans Service Organizations, representatives from the Veterans Health Administration, and fellow Congressmen.

The bills in question included expanding the definition of 'homeless veteran' to those veterans fleeing violent households or domestic violence; paying for non-VA care at private clinics and hospitals without those private organizations facing the same regulation and mandatory reporting of care as federally contracted businesses; allowing the VA to provide In Vitro Fertilization options to veterans and dependents who are unable to procreate due to service-connected disabilities; providing more options and resources for care for post-traumatic stress; and funding research to test toxic exposure to veterans from all conflicts to see if they could be entitled to benefits.

All of the VSO's and the Committee agreed that such bills are important and support their passage. However, the VA did not support the passage of the Toxic Exposure Act. The Director of Patient Care at the VA claimed that illnesses as a result of exposure to toxic agents are rare, and a large test group is necessary to determine this. He claimed that the VA would duplicate studies done by other federal agencies who have either finished, or are in the process of producing studies on this topic. These claims baffled the Committee, who asked for additional information from the VA to substantiate their statements.

JOIN AUSN'S LEGISLATIVE CORPS!

Recently, AUSN launched a new and improved version of our previous Legislative Liaison program, called "Legislative Corps." Please email LegislativeCorps@ausn.org if you would like to join our Legislative Corps and be sent an official invitation to all Legislative Corps events and phone musters in the future.

The AUSN Legislative Corps will be AUSN's national grassroots advocacy network comprised of more than 20,000 AUSN members and Friends of the Navy supporters of the Sea Services and Veterans. Members of the AUSN Legislative Corps will stay up-to-date on the issues facing our military and their families and veterans; standing ready to email, write, call and visit our nation's lawmakers to make their voices heard.

The goal of the AUSN Legislative Corps will be to further enhance the Voice for America's Sailors on Capitol Hill, by educating Congress and the nation on issues pertaining to our Navy, national defense, veterans, and retirees. The AUSN Legislative Corps is free and open to all members of AUSN and citizens who have an interest in our Sea Services and veterans' communities. More details on this program will be released soon.

ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS FOR SUMMER INTERNS

AUSN is currently accepting applications for Summer 2015 internships. While at AUSN, Legislative Interns will assist the Legislative Director in not only performing administrative tasks, but also with day to day operations of the office. AUSN Legislative Interns will track and monitor upcoming Congressional hearings. In addition, in cases where the hearings are



not televised or streamed online, the interns will go to Capitol Hill and take notes and monitor the hearings of the Senate/House Armed Services Committees, Senate/House Defense Appropriations Committees, Senate/House MILCON&VA Appropriations Committees and the Senate/House Veterans Affairs Committees. Afterwards, the Legislative Director will review After Action Reports (AAR's) before distribution to Executive Director and AUSN staff. Along with this responsibility, interns will proofread letters to Members of Congress from the Legislative Director, Capitol Hill Blog, and Legislative Alerts before either the Legislative Director or Intern posts to the website.

Interested candidates can submit a cover letter, resume and 1-2 page writing sample to the Director of Legislation and Government Relations, Mr. Edgar Rodriguez at edgar.rodriguez@ausn.org. AUSN internships are part-time ranging from 2-3 days a week, and Metrorail travel reimbursement is available to interns as well as free parking at our office in Alexandria, VA.

AUSN LEGISLATION INFORMATION

In the advocacy section of the website, you can click on Bills of Interest to get daily revisions on Congressional action for all AUSN priority bills. We strongly encourage you all to visit our Advocacy page, especially the Capitol Hill Blog which receives almost daily submissions when Congress is in session to see what AUSN is doing for you on Capitol Hill.

We also encourage you and your friends and family to visit the [AUSN FACEBOOK PAGE](#). If you have an account, please Login and "Like" us, which will allow you to see our [TWITTER](#) feeds and other updates from AUSN that shows us monitoring Capitol Hill on your behalf!

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS/CONCERNS

Edgar Rodriguez, Director of Legislation and Government Relations
Phone (Office): 703-548-5800, (Mobile): 703-517-9310
E-mail: Edgar.Rodriguez@ausn.org

Michael Little, Director of Military and Veterans Benefits
Phone (Office): 703-548-5800, (Mobile): 703-859-5932
E-mail: Michael.Little@ausn.org