



AFSA  
ON CALL



## LEGISLATIVE UPDATES AND NEWS

### Key Legislation Advancing

This week, several key pieces of military and veteran's legislation were advancing in Congress. They are as follows:

**Senate Version of NDAA:** The Senate Armed Services Subcommittees are marking up their respective portions of the FY 2012 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) this week, but much of the work is being conducted in closed door sessions. Details on the bill were unavailable at press time. We are told the SASC leadership intends to reveal its contents during a press conference once the Subcommittee's actions are completed. The bill must still be approved by the full Committee and Senate, and hundreds of amendments to the Subcommittees recommendations are expected as part of that process. So it will be quite some time before we see a final Senate bill. AFSA was recently told the bill would probably come to the Senate floor after the Independence Day Holiday. Eventually the House and Senate bills will be reconciled in a Conference Committee. With Congress in recess August 6 to September 5, it may be early fall before we see the final product. As AFSA previously reported, the House approved its version of the annual defense measure, H.R. 1540, on May 26.

**House Defense Appropriations Bill:** The House Appropriations Committee approved its fiscal year 2012 Defense Appropriations Bill on Tuesday. This legislation contains funding for critical national security needs, and provides the necessary resources to continue the nation's military efforts abroad. In addition, the bill provides essential funding for health and quality of life programs for the men and women of the Armed Services and their families. In total, the bill contains \$530 billion in non-emergency funding, an increase of \$17 billion over last year's level and a decrease of \$9 billion from the President's request. It also provides \$119 billion in emergency spending for DoD activities related to the Global War on Terror. A pair of amendments inserted in the bill as part of Tuesday's action require DoD and VA to jointly submit a report to Congress addressing the issue of high unemployment rates among recently separated veterans, and a separate requirement for DoD to report on the approximate \$100 billion in "efficiency savings" previously announced, including specifying the details of the savings, and where they were reinvested-two worthy areas deserving the additional scrutiny.

House MILCON/VA Funding Bill: The House on Tuesday approved H.R. 2055, the "Fiscal Year 2012 Military Construction, Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies Appropriations Act." As we reported last week, this bill provides \$72.5 billion in discretionary funding for military construction projects, veterans programs and other agencies that support the quality of life of service members and veterans. H.R. 2055 now heads to the Senate which has yet to pass a single appropriations bill this year.

#### AFSA Joins House Minority Leader for Roundtable Discussion on Military and Veterans Issues

On Wednesday, members of the AFSA Legislative Team joined representatives from other major military and veterans organizations in a roundtable meeting with House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and nearly a dozen House Democratic members to discuss issues pertaining to the military community. During the meeting, topics focused on a number of important issues including military and veterans' appropriations, veteran's healthcare, rehabilitation, employment and homelessness prevention programs, mental healthcare for service members, and repeal of the SBP/DIC offset. In one-on-one conversations with congressional members and Leader Pelosi after the meeting, AFSA representatives relayed our concerns with recent calls for cuts in military pay and benefits, Guard and Reserve issues, and the stalled effort to expand concurrent receipt to all disabled retirees and elimination of the SBP/DIC offset.

#### SASC Approves SECDEF Nomination

On Tuesday, the Senate Armed Services Committee approved President Obama's nomination of current CIA Director Mr. Leon Panetta to become the next Secretary of Defense. If confirmed by the full Senate, Panetta will succeed Defense Secretary Robert Gates, who will leave the post on June 30, 2011. A Senate vote is expected in the near future.

#### VETERANS NEWS

##### VA Assistant Secretary Steps Down

VA Assistant Secretary for Public and Intergovernmental Affairs, L. Tammy Duckworth, is stepping down from her post. VA [http://blogs.suntimes.com/sweet/2011/06/tammy\\_duckworth\\_submits\\_resign.html](http://blogs.suntimes.com/sweet/2011/06/tammy_duckworth_submits_resign.html) Secretary Eric K. Shinseki confirmed her departure in a press release early this week saying she "has served the Department of Veterans Affairs with distinction. Her unwavering dedication to veterans and their families has strengthened VA's ability to perform our mission-providing veterans the healthcare and benefits they have earned. Tammy Duckworth uniquely understands the needs of today's veterans and their families, and her commitment to serving Veterans and increasing VA's outreach has helped the department serve more Veterans and serve them well," Shinseki said. "We will miss her advocacy and leadership, but wish her the very best in the years to come."

A major in the Illinois Army National Guard, Duckworth served in Iraq as an Assistant Operations Officer and a Black Hawk helicopter pilot. During a

mission north of Baghdad in 2004, the aircraft she was co-piloting was ambushed and struck by a rocket-propelled grenade. The crew successfully landed the aircraft but as a result of the attack, Duckworth lost both of her legs and partial use of one arm. Following an extended recovery period, Duckworth became a veteran's advocate and immediately prior to her assistant secretary post, she was chief of the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs. In 2006, she also made an unsuccessful bid for Illinois' 6th Congressional District, losing a tight race to Rep. Peter Roskam (R-IL).

#### Army Appoints New Deputy Superintendent at Arlington

The Army has brought in James Gemmell, the former director of VA's Fort Snelling National Cemetery, to serve as Arlington's new deputy superintendent. Gemmell, an Army veteran, previously ran the National Training Center for VA's national cemeteries. In June 2010, the Army released a report from its Inspector General that found widespread problems at the cemetery, including the loss of accountability of remains, remains found in gravesites believed unoccupied, unmarked gravesites, discrepancies in burial documentation, improperly marked gravesites, improper handling of cremated remains and failure to notify next-of-kin about changes in gravesites. Since that time, Arlington has been the subject of close scrutiny including hearings in Congress, and now the Army, with Mr. Gemmell's appointment, has completely changed leadership at nation's pre-eminent burial ground for its honored dead since the Civil War. Click [HERE](http://www.army.mil/article/59440/In_wake_of_investigation__advancements_made_at_Arlington_cemetery/) .

#### Are You New to the VA?

If you are new to the VA system and wondering where to find information on benefits like disability compensation, the GI Bill, or a home loan, check out the Veterans Benefits Administration home page, click [HERE](http://www.vba.va.gov/VBA/) .

#### PTSD Coach? Yes, There is an App for That

The PTSD Coach smart-phone application (app) jointly launched in April by the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense has already helped more than 5,000 users connect with important mental health information and resources. "This new tool is about helping Veterans and Service Members when and where they need it," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "We are encouraged so many have already downloaded this resource and hope many more will utilize this convenient tool to access VA services." Since its launch, the PTSD Coach app has been downloaded by thousands of individuals. While 96 percent of the users so far are located in the United States, the app has also been downloaded in 25 other countries. The app lets users track their PTSD symptoms, links them with public and personalized sources of support, provides accurate information about PTSD, and teaches helpful strategies for managing PTSD symptoms on the go. Information on the app is on VA's National Center for PTSD Website, click [HERE](http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/pages/PTSDCoach.asp) .

#### HEALTH CARE

TRICARE Eligibility Requires DEERS Enrollment for Newborns TRICARE offers a variety of health plans that seek to provide the best quality of care for parents and their babies. However, if children are not properly registered in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS), they risk losing their TRICARE benefits. It is essential that parents register their children in DEERS within one year of birth or adoption in order to avoid a lapse in the dependent's TRICARE coverage. Find out more about what's required to register your child in DEERS and which TRICARE plans newborns are eligible for, click HERE

<[http://www.tricare.mil/mediacenter/press\\_article.aspx?fid=539](http://www.tricare.mil/mediacenter/press_article.aspx?fid=539)> .

#### TRICARE Home Delivery

TRICARE offers several convenient ways for you to have prescriptions filled. Consider the TRICARE Pharmacy Home Delivery option as it is the most cost effective option after the military pharmacy: Click HERE

<<http://tricare.mil/mybenefit/ProfileFilter.do;jsessionid=N35GcGD34GltJHrBnMvFNdCpydVwpMRl2k1BpcvJVNGrZ4ypfRrF!185295051?&puri=%2Fhome%2FPrescriptions%2FFillingPrescriptions>> .

Are you new to TRICARE?

Watch this video to learn how to start receiving TRICARE benefits, click HERE <<http://www.youtube.com/user/tricarehealth>> .

#### AROUND OUR NATION

WANT INSTANT UPDATES? - AFSA IS NOW ON TWITTER

Be first in getting the latest updates and follow AFSA ON CALL. We are now posting daily and weekly updates on Twitter. As you may already know, Twitter allows for instant updates and happenings around the world, either on computers or your portable devices.

Sign up for your AFSA Twitter updates, click HERE

<[http://twitter.com/#\\_afsahq](http://twitter.com/#_afsahq)> .

#### AFSA MEMBER BENEFITS

##### FLOWERS FROM FTD.COM

AFSA members can automatically save 15% on floral and gift purchases by shopping HERE <<http://www.ftd.com/afsa>> , or by calling (800) SEND-FTD and giving promo code 4578.

##### DISCOUNT PRESCRIPTION CARD

AFSA members & dependents have a Prescription Discount Benefit. Cut your prescription costs up to 20% on brand-name drugs and save as much as 50% on generic medicines with the RxAmerica program. To print your prescription card click HERE <<http://www.afsainsurance.com/>> , select "wellness", then choose "RX America Prescription Plan".

#### TEAM AFSA GIFT ITEMS

Share your AFSA pride! AFSA has a wide range of very reasonably priced AFSA caps, commemorative coins, decals, medals, pins, plaques, awards and certificates available 24/7 on our website: [www.hqafsa.org](http://www.hqafsa.org)  
<<http://www.hqafsa.org/>> .

#### DID YOU KNOW?

Membership with the AFSA has never been more important and renewing your membership is even easier. AFSA International Headquarters is pleased to announce that the Auto Deduct/Auto Renewal Application is posted on the AFSA Website under Resource -- Membership Docs. All new and current members interested in enrolling in the Auto Deduct/Auto Renewal Program should print and complete the application, sign it and mail the completed/signed application to the AFSA International Headquarters at 5211 Auth Road, Suitland, Maryland 20746.

#### 2011 PROFESSIONAL AIRMEN'S CONFERENCE

Don't forget to make your Grand Hyatt Hotel reservations - [CLICK HERE](https://resweb.passkey.com/Resweb.do?mode=welcome_ei_new&eventID=3363646)  
<[https://resweb.passkey.com/Resweb.do?mode=welcome\\_ei\\_new&eventID=3363646](https://resweb.passkey.com/Resweb.do?mode=welcome_ei_new&eventID=3363646)>  
for online reservation to get started; please select "Attendee" from the drop down menu.

NOTE: AFSA contracted room rates are guaranteed and available beginning on July 23, through Wednesday-night, July 27, 2011. If you are planning to arrive before July 23, or stay after July 27, 2011, AFSA can not guarantee contracted room rates and you must CALL the Grand Hyatt reservation line to make your reservations 1-800-233-1234

AFSA has contracted overflow hotel accommodations with the Hyatt Regency San Antonio, 123 Losoya Street, and the San Antonio Marriott Riverwalk, 889 East Market Street.

Overflow hotel accommodations can be made with the Hyatt Regency by calling the central reservations at 1-888-421-1442

or

The San Antonio Marriott Riverwalk by calling Marriott reservations at 1-800-648-4462

#### RESUME OF CANDIDATE FOR ELECTED OFFICE

IAW AFSA Manual 100-2, Policies and Procedures, October 1, 2010, AFSA Headquarters must be in receipt of a properly prepared "Resume of Candidate for Elected Office," not less than fifteen (15) days before the International Convention's convening date. Additional lead-time would be most helpful to allow AFSA International Headquarters time to print the candidate's portfolio for the general membership attending the international convention. For printing purposes, HQ request all "Resume of Candidate for Elected Office" be submitted NLT 23 June 2011.

<http://www.hqafsa.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=About>>

We want to hear your thoughts and opinions. Complete the sentence below!  
What's your top 10 list for AFSA? Go ahead. Don't be bashful. Send it.

"I THINK AFSA SHOULD \_\_\_\_\_."

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