

Legislative Program

2023-2024

Department of NH VFW Auxiliary Legislative 2023-2024

Be An Advocate-Be Informed-Be Engaged

February General Information

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Hope everyone is well. It was nice seeing auxiliary members at both the January C of A and I hope you enjoyed yourselves if you attended the Scholastic Banquet. At the C of A I touched base on the importance of signing up for Action Corps as well as voting in the election that occurred that week. I know that the Franklin post hosted Nikki Haley the night before the primaries and I hope other posts/auxiliaries were able to do the same. Last month I gave an overview of what happens when the President reviews the bills once received from Congress. This month I would like to give an overview of the bills that are being for review to Congress.

H.R. 1815/S. 495, the Expanding Veterans' Options for Long Term Care Act, would require the VA to implement a three-year pilot program (with the opportunity for an additional three years) to provide assisted living services in no fewer than six geographically diverse areas. Veterans who would be eligible to participate are those who are already receiving nursing home level care paid for by the VA, are eligible for such care from the VA, or exceed the requirements for domiciliary care paid for by the VA but do not meet the requirements for nursing home level care paid for by the VA. This bill would also require the VA to report on the cost of care at each assisted living facility, including an analysis of any cost savings by the VA when compared to the cost of nursing home care, feedback from participants in the pilot program, and recommendations on whether the model studied in the pilot program should be continued or adopted throughout the department.

H.R. 6331/S. 2465, the Delivering Optimally Urgent Labor Access (DOULA) for Veterans Affairs Act of 2023. This bill would establish a pilot program within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to provide pregnant and post-partum women veterans access to doula services in an effort to foster better child and maternal health outcomes. Pregnancy, labor and delivery, and the early days of motherhood, can be difficult in the best of circumstances, but for women veterans, they can be further complicated by physical and mental health conditions related to military service—this includes anxiety, depression, PTSD due to combat or military sexual trauma, musculoskeletal problems and neurological issues. Doulas act as advocates before, during, and after pregnancy, helping expectant and new mothers navigate their birth experience and empowering them to self-advocate for their care, which can be especially important when health care needs are profound or veterans do not have strong, established support networks. This legislation would enhance support services for pregnant women veterans by providing access to doula care within pilot facilities, which is vital as the demand for maternity care services continues to trend upward within VA due to the growing population. By establishing Doula Service Coordinators, this legislation would also help aid in the effort to coordinate care between VA and community providers. In addition, with a focus on health equity, the establishment of the pilot program would be important in addressing poorer

maternal health outcomes among minority veteran groups. Consistent with DAV Resolution No. 027, to support enhanced medical services and benefits for women veterans, we support H.R. 6331/S. 2465.

3341, the Advancing VA's Emergency Response to (AVERT) Crises Act of 2023, would improve VA's response to natural disasters, pandemics and other emergencies to ensure continuity of VA medical care for veterans, and ensure that the department is better prepared to activate its fourth mission authority in responding to national emergencies. It would require VA to implement fully-operational emergency communications systems throughout VA medical facilities and improve VA's emergency cache program—stored reserves at facilities containing drugs and medical supplies to be used during an emergency.

S. 3526, the Lactation Spaces for Veteran Moms Act, would require each VA medical center to create a lactation station for veterans who are nursing. As the number of women veterans using VA health care continues to grow, VA must ensure that it creates environments that are safe and welcoming to all veterans. This includes private, convenient and hygienic lactation stations that women can easily and safely access while they are obtaining the health care they have earned.

As you can see the DAV works diligently to get these bills in front of Congress. It is our responsibility to take action the ActionCorp to make sure we are heard.

Is your Auxiliary caught up on reporting? Do not forget that you should report when you have emailed representatives, taken action and/or read Action Corps, shared any legislative information with your auxiliary.

Tammy L. Baker
Department of NH VFW Auxiliary
Legislative Chair 2023-2024