

National Legislative Division Weekly

GRASSROOTS ALERT: BATTLE SHIFTS TO THE SENATE TO PASS RICHARD STAR AMENDMENT

This week, the Senate is beginning its consideration of the National Defense Authorization Act - and we need your help to include language that supports our disabled veteran military retirees. The Major Richard Star Act is scheduled to be introduced as Amendment #142 to the NDAA and is expected to be put to a vote as soon as Monday. Your voice can make a difference in passing this legislation in the Senate!

The American Legion supports the Richard Star Act and encourages all Legionnaires to contact their members of Congress and ask them to support the legislation. Click [here](#) to reach out today.

CONGRESS

The Senate started floor consideration of its FY24 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) on Wednesday. Senate Majority Leader Schumer (D-NY) predicts they will finish sometime next week. So far, nine amendments have received stand-alone votes. A package of 52 amendments (21 Democratic, 21 Republican, and nine bipartisan) has been cleared by both sides for consideration as an *en bloc* package.

One of the amendments in that package, which has yet to be formally introduced on the floor, would extend until February 1, 2025, the ability of Military Departments to retain some medical research and public health activities. The 2017 NDAA moved all of those activities into the Defense Health Agency, but Congress has allowed some programs to stay within individual Services a little longer.

Last week, Rep. Greene (R-GA) surprised many by voting for the NDAA when, just the night before, she told reporters she would vote against it when several House Freedom Caucus amendments failed to be adopted. On Friday, she told reporters she switched her vote after Speaker McCarthy (R-CA) promised her a seat on the conference committee for the NDAA.

If the Senate does pass the NDAA next week, staff will be able to spend the August recess preparing for a formal conference in September.

However, Thursday afternoon Sen. Marshall (R-KS) threatened to derail the NDAA proceedings if his legislation, cosponsored with Sen. Durbin (D-IL), on credit card transactions does not see action. This legislation would ensure that credit card companies offer a choice of at least two networks over which an electronic credit transaction may be processed. The industry strenuously opposes the measure.

That assumes there is an August recess. Several Democrats have started floating the possibility of keeping the Senate in session during August to take up the military promotion votes impacted by Sen. Tuberville's (R-AL) hold. Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) chair Sen. Reed (D-RI) says it would take almost 90 days to clear all of the promotions through regular procedural processes if the Senate were to work eight hours a day. If they worked around the clock, including on weekends, the task could be accomplished in just under 30 days. Schumer has not denied the possibility of cancelling the August recess.

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In the meantime, on Thursday, the SASC reported out almost 2,700 more military promotions, including Gen. Brown to be Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Gen. George to be Army Chief of Staff. Sen. Tuberville (R-AL) was among the committee members to unanimously approve these nominations. Of course, his hold will prevent rapid approval by the full Senate.

Pentagon representatives briefed the SASC on Wednesday concerning the reproductive care travel and leave policy fueling Tuberville's hold. Democrats left the meeting telling reporters they were fully convinced of the policy's legality, while Republicans made clear they were not convinced.

Tuberville also had another phone call with Defense Secretary Austin this week, which he described as cordial. The Senator has made clear he will only be appeased with the Pentagon repealing the policy. He acknowledges that any vote in the Senate for repeal would fail, and this will not satisfy him. Tuberville continues to tell reporters he does not believe military claims that readiness and national security are harmed by his extended hold, since someone is covering every affected position. He does not respond when asked about the fates of families impacted by the uncertainty of their service member's status and future, with moving and school plans thrown into limbo. While refusing to accept the results of a Senate vote on repeal, Tuberville told a reporter the Pentagon does not "have any appetite for concessions."

The Senate Appropriations Committee, on Thursday, voted out three more spending bills. Schumer continues to express confidence in his Chamber moving forward on appropriations legislation, after the NDAA is finished. It is unclear how this could happen before the August recess begins.

During that hearing, committee chair Sen. Murray (D-WA) acknowledged that the topline spending amounts allowed by the Fiscal Responsibility Act (FRA) require cuts in most federal programs. She said she has reached agreement with her ranking member, Sen. Collins (R-ME), to add \$13.7 billion in additional emergency appropriations. Of that, \$8 billion would be for defense and \$5.7 billion would be spread among four non-defense spending bills. "This additional spending," she said, "is important for us to be able to continue to work together on a bipartisan basis to address the urgent challenges our country faces."

The appropriations process in the House is moving far less smoothly. Republicans continue to attach provisions limiting LGBTQ rights, abortion services and care, and diversity initiatives. Democrats are pushing back. On Tuesday, the committee was forced to recess twice during its markup of the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development (THUD) bill. The uproar followed introduction of a Republican amendment to strip out three earmarked projects for LGBTQ community centers.

House Majority Leader McCarthy (R-CA) is beginning to talk about the possibility of passing a single omnibus or multiple minibuses of spending bills, rather than single appropriations bills as he had sworn to do at the start of the year.

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FEMALE ADMIRAL NOMINATED TO BE NAVY'S NEXT TOP OFFICER, 1ST WOMAN TO LEAD A MILITARY SERVICE



[\[From Stars and Stripes\]](#)

President Joe Biden on Friday nominated Navy Adm. Lisa M. Franchetti to become the first woman to lead a military service and be a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

“Franchetti will bring 38 years of dedicated service to our nation as a commissioned officer, including in her current role of vice chief of naval operations,” Biden said. “She is the second woman ever to achieve the rank of four-star

admiral in the United States Navy, and when confirmed, she will again make history as the first woman to serve as the chief of naval operations and on the Joint Chiefs.”

Franchetti, 59, joined the Navy in the mid-1980s and has held several commands, including the Sixth Fleet, Naval Forces Korea, the USS Ross and multiple carrier strike groups. She will succeed Adm. Michael Gilday as chief of naval operations – the highest-ranking officer in the Navy and key adviser to the Secretary of the Navy. Gilday retires Aug. 21.

A graduate of Northwestern University, Franchetti grew up in New York and was commissioned in the Navy in 1985. She’s served on several ships and was once assistant to the Secretary of the Navy. Franchetti has also attended the Naval War College in Rhode Island and earned a master’s degree in organizational management.

Biden on Friday also nominated three other Navy leaders. He nominated Vice Adm. James Kilby to be vice chief of naval operations, Adm. Samuel Paparo as commander of Indo-Pacific Command, and Vice Adm. Stephen Koehler as commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet.

“[They] represent the best of the United States Navy. Together, these four highly decorated naval officers have extensive operational and command experience,” Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said. “I’m very proud that Adm. Franchetti has been nominated to be the first woman chief of naval operations and member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, where she will continue to inspire all of us.” It’s not yet known, however, when Franchetti might formally ascend to the job. She joins a long list of military officers who have been promoted, but are unable to receive swift Senate confirmation due to the block of the votes by Sen. Tommy Tuberville, R-Ala.

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Tuberville has been singlehandedly blocking more than 200 military promotions over his opposition to a Pentagon policy that reimburses travel expenses for service members who must travel to another state for reproductive health care. The policy is the result of several states severely restricting or banning abortions in the past year.

Senate rules allow one senator to hold up what is usually an expedited confirmation process on the floor of the upper chamber. Tuberville has repeatedly defended his action, which holds the Senate from simultaneously confirming large numbers of military promotions in a single voice vote. He has maintained the Senate can still confirm military leaders nominated for promotion one at a time. Democrats, however, have rejected that idea, saying it would eat up months of Senate business time.

LEGIONNAIRE OF THE WEEK

In an effort 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.

Christopher Holt, Texas

This week, we are excited to recognize Christopher Holt from the Department of Texas for meeting with Representative Ronnie Jackson (R-TX-13). Christopher spoke with Rep. Jackson for over an hour at the Will Rogers Rodeo Arena about current issues at the local VA and getting his support to help bring a Veterans Cemetery to the Texas Panhandle. Rep. Jackson then helped Christopher's Post sell Raffle Tickets and talked to a few of the Veterans about their concerns.

Thank you, Christopher!

If you have made a grassroots effort and would like to be considered for next week's "Legionnaire of the Week," please fill out the Congressional Contact Report Form [here](#). You can also email me at jkamin@legion.org.

UPCOMING HEARINGS

- On Wednesday, July 26 at 3:00pm EST, the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee (SVAC) will hold a hearing on "Implementing the PACT (Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics) Act: One Year Later." [Here is the link to watch.](#)
- On Wednesday, July 26 at 4:00pm EST, the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) will hold a hearing on "Potential Budgetary Efficiencies Achieved Through Improvement to Management and Planning Processes Within Department of Defense Personnel Programs." [Here is the link to watch.](#)

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- On Thursday, July 27 at 10:00am EST, the House Veterans Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs will hold an oversight hearing titled: “VA Disability Exams: Are Veterans Receiving Quality Services?”. [Here is the link to watch.](#)