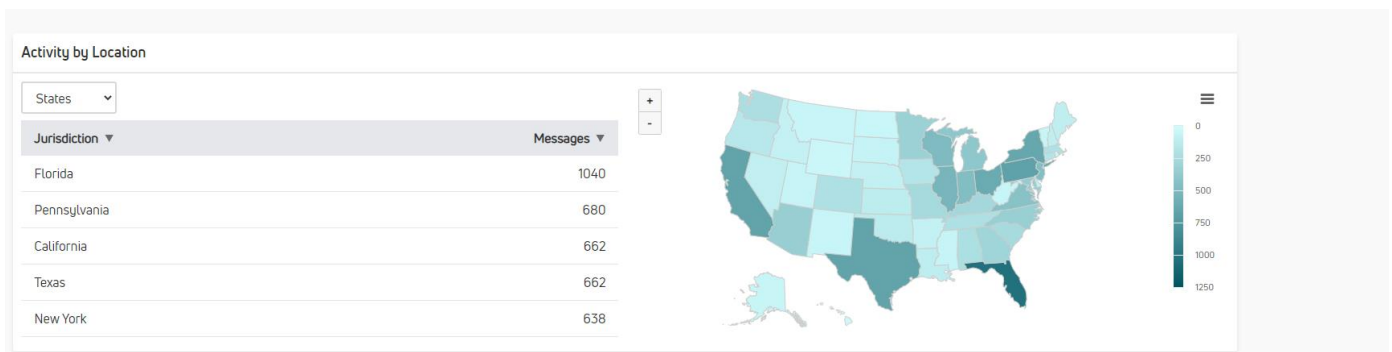


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GRASSROOTS ALERT: TAKE ACTION TO SUPPORT VETERANS EXPOSED TO TOXIC HAZARDS

This week, The American Legion National Headquarters sent out an alert to NLC members and Legislative Action Center subscribers to [call on their Senators](#) to pass H.R. 3967, the Honoring our PACT Act. In three weeks, **13,040** messages were sent to Senators. Florida, Pennsylvania, and California had the largest share of total messages sent to their respective Senators. This can be seen in the graphic below:



In addition, we'd like to recognize the Department of **Nevada** for having the highest rate of engagement, which accounts for the Legionnaire population of each state. Round of applause for Nevada Legionnaires!

This campaign will be the top legislative priority of The American Legion until the Senate acts on this critical piece of legislation. National Commander Paul Dillard has visited Minnesota, Georgia, Alaska, South Dakota, and Indiana on a [multi-state tour](#) to spread awareness of the PACT Act. This week, he also held a [press conference](#) where he urged Legionnaires to take action and press their senators to vote yes on this critical piece of legislation.

Status updates will be shared weekly, and Legionnaires are encouraged to disseminate this campaign far and wide.

TAKE ACTION NOW

AMERICAN LEGION CALLS FOR IMMIGRATION REFORM

The American Legion's National Security Commission has been reviewing immigration policy issues with those in the field to discuss needs with the border, visa application, legal immigration application, asylum system and more. The U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency estimates that there are 11.4 million undocumented immigrants currently residing within the United States – approximately 45% of them arrived in the United States legally but have overstayed their visa.

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The American Legion believes in legal immigration into the United States and a path toward becoming a U.S. citizen. To help in those efforts, the National Security Commission presented an immigration reform policy resolution during The American Legion's Spring Meetings May 5 in Indianapolis. Resolution No. 23, Immigration Reform, was adopted by the National Executive Committee.

As stated, the resolution urges the U.S. government to:

- Adopt immigration reform policy that emphasizes border security, focusing on funding for barriers where needed, fielding of advanced technologies, and fully manning the border;
- Enact laws that improve visa security through thorough vetting of applicants, reducing visa overstays and ending visa programs that are vulnerable to exploitation by bad actors;
- Streamline the legal immigration application process so as to help reduce and discourage illegal immigration;
- Reform the asylum system and adhere to laws requiring detention and expedited due process and/or removal of illegal border crossers; and
- Strengthen immigration reform agreements with transit countries to discourage the flow of immigrants that attempt to enter the United States illegally.

Resolution 23 is available [here](#).

CONGRESS

The House will be back in session next week. The House Armed Services Committee (HASC) has already announced a full slate of hearings on various elements of the military, as the committee drives to start marking up the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) early next month.

THE VA AND THE SOUTHERN BORDER

The Biden Administration is reportedly about to lift Title 42 at the Southern border. The previous Administration had used the rule to send undocumented immigrants back to Mexico. Lifting the rule would allow these individuals to stay in the United States while awaiting asylum decisions.

There has been a small firestorm in Congress and elsewhere at the prospect of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) calling upon the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to send medical personnel to the border to treat those immigrants for COVID and other conditions.

As a result, for the last few weeks, Republican lawmakers have asked a number of VA witnesses whether VA personnel will be diverted from treating veterans to care for migrants. On Wednesday, VA Secretary McDonough hopefully put the matter to rest when he assured the Senate Appropriations Committee's Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Subcommittee (SAC-Milcon) this will not happen. The American Legion recently passed [Resolution 23](#), which calls for immigration reform.

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THE VA'S ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORD MODERNIZATION (EHRM) INITIATIVE

McDonough told the SAC-Milcon that, since March 3, the facilities using the new EHR system have experienced six outages due to system imbalance and similar issues. Cerner, the EHR provider, is in charge of ensuring these problems do not occur. Describing himself as “frustrated” by this, McDonough indicated a reluctance to continue rolling out the system at additional sites until that is fixed.

The system has experienced outages of up to just over two hours at both Mann-Grandstaff and Walla Walla, two facilities located in Washington state. No reported outages have yet occurred at the Columbus, Ohio, facility, which was the third and most recent medical center to implement the Cerner EHR system,

At Wednesday’s hearing, McDonough denied reports that Mann-Grandstaff is planning to cut back on veterans’ care due to productivity losses caused by the EHR implementation. The Secretary promised Sen. Murray (D-WA) that there is no such plan, and he would not support such a move.

McDonough and other VA leaders have told Senate committees this week that lessons learned on training staff on the new system have resulted in far smoother rollouts at both Walla Walla and Columbus. The plan is to continue implementing the system in smaller, less complicated settings, while building up to tackle larger facilities later in the schedule.

The Cerner system is next scheduled to be implemented on June 11 at the Roseburg VA Health Care System and the VA Southern Oregon Rehabilitation Center and Clinic, both located in Oregon.

UPCOMING HEARINGS

- On Tuesday, May 10, the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) will hold a hearing titled, “To receive testimony on worldwide threats.”
- On Wednesday, May 11, the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense will hold a hearing titled, “Fiscal Year 2023 Department of Defense.”
- On Wednesday, May 11, the House Veterans’ Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity will hold a hearing titled, “Reviewing President Biden’s Strategy to Reduce Veteran Suicide by Addressing Economic Risk Factors.”
- On Wednesday, May 11, the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee (SVAC) will hold a hearing titled, “Hearings to examine the quality of care in the VA and private sector.”

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

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their Congressional Representative/Senator to advocate for veterans. Efforts like these truly make a difference and give veterans a voice in Congress.

Commander Rafael Munoz-Cintron, Washington

This week, we are excited to recognize Commander Rafael Munoz-Cintron for meeting with staff from the office of Representative Smith (D-WA), who is the Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee (HASC). Commander Munoz-Cintron went to discuss “Buddy Check Week” legislation, which would direct the Secretary of VA to designate one week each year as “Buddy Check Week” for the purpose of outreach and education concerning peer wellness checks for veterans. After the meeting, the staffer emailed Commander Munoz-Cintron to update him on the bill’s progress.

Thank you, Commander Munoz-Cintron!

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 kisaacson@legion.org.

MEETINGS

- This week NLD Staff participated in the Spring NEC meetings at the TAL Headquarters in Indianapolis.
- On Monday, May 2, NLD Staff attended an event hosted by the Hudson Institute titled: “Should the US Overhaul its Defense Strategy? A conversation with Congressman Mike Rogers (R-AL).” More information and video are [here](#).
- On Monday, May 2, NLD Staff participated in a VSO weekly meeting to discuss the Honoring Our PACT Act.
- On Tuesday, May 3, NLD Staff attended a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing titled: “State Department Authorization: Strengthening U.S. Diplomacy for the 21st Century.” Testimony and video are [here](#).
- On Tuesday, May 3, NLD Staff attended an event hosted by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) titled: “The Spear and the Shield? Japan's Defense Strategy Trajectory.” More information and video are [here](#).
- On Tuesday, May 3, NLD Staff participated in a National Security Reform working group meeting to discuss the balance of power between the president and Congress regarding the use of military force.
- On Tuesday, May 3, NLD Staff attended a “Four Corners” Veterans Committee call on economic opportunity issues including homelessness and education oversight.
- On Tuesday, May 3, NLD Staff participated in a meeting with Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) to discuss legislative strategies for passing the Honoring Our PACT Act in the Senate.
- On Tuesday, May 3, NLD Staff monitored an SVAC hearing on VA workforce recruitment and retention.

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- On Wednesday, May 4, NLD Staff monitored an SVAC hearing on the pending nomination for VA Under Secretary of Health.
- On Thursday, May 5, NLD Staff attended a Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs hearing titled: “Securing and Ensuring Order on the Southwest Border.” Testimony and video are [here](#).
- On Thursday, May 5, NLD Staff participated meeting to discuss the Honoring Our PACT Act event in Washington D.C.
- On Friday, May 6, NLD Staff spoke with House Veterans’ Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity Minority Staff about draft legislation to lower appraisal fees on the VA Home Loan Program.

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