



Veterans' legislation roundup

The final stretch of the 116th Congress is coming up, and there have been thousands of pieces of legislation introduced over the last year and a half. Since the last *Postal Record* review of veterans-specific legislation in December 2019, there have been numerous bills introduced that affect veterans one way or another. The following are those that are most significant to NALC and its members.

Veterans-related legislation due to COVID-19

As our country and the world is still responding to the devastating public health and economic crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic, multiple pieces of legislation have been introduced that address its impact on veterans specifically, two of which were signed into law in late March and April, respectively.

S. 3503 (became law March 21, 2020)

This bipartisan legislation, introduced by Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Jerry Moran (R-KS), sought to help veterans who are continuing their education and taking courses that were moved online in response to the pandemic. Now signed into law, it authorizes the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to maintain payment levels for students whose courses are converted to distance learning due to an "emergency or health-related situation." It applies through Dec. 21 and covers a wide range of benefits, which include housing stipends under the Post-9/11 GI Bill and payments for veterans' survivors and dependents.

H.R. 6322—Student Veteran Coronavirus Response Act of 2020 (became law April 28, 2020)

Introduced by House Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Mark

Takano (D-CA), this bipartisan legislation also addresses education and veterans by authorizing the VA to make payments or extend eligibility periods for students who participate in work-study or vocational rehabilitation programs, are affected by school closures or can't take courses online. Typically, the VA provides monthly payments for eligible veterans and other beneficiaries to use for housing, tuition and other educational costs, and this law continues that policy during any interruption caused by the pandemic.

H.R. 6590 (introduced April 21, 2020)

The COVID-19 pandemic and the associated economic downturn caused severe financial problems for millions of Americans. Debt collection was prohibited temporarily and in certain circumstances, such as those instituted by Department of Education and the Social Security Administration. Rep. Chris Pappas's (D-NH) legislation would expand the temporary prohibition of collecting debts by preventing the VA from demanding repayment until the current federal emergency declaration is lifted. Current VA policy states that it is up to each individual veteran to ask the VA for temporary debt suspension.

H.R. 6591 (introduced April 21, 2020)

This legislation seeks to provide covered veterans with access to and continued coverage for life-saving procedures and care related to COVID-19 without being saddled with thousands of dollars in medical fees. To do so, it would relax the existing requirements related to how the VA pays for emergency care, ensure that payment is not contingent on whether community providers notified the VA within 72 hours of providing emergency treatment to a veteran, and make sure any VA payments are not delayed by clinical re-

views, as they often slow payment timeliness. As with the previous bill, this is a temporary measure until the current federal emergency declaration is lifted.

Other veterans-related legislation

Numerous other pieces of veterans-related legislation were introduced since December and are largely bipartisan. Here is a breakdown of some of those.

S. 3587—Department of Veterans Affairs Website Accessibility Act of 2019 (passed Senate March 26, 2020)

Introduced by Sen. Bob Casey (D-PA), this bill would require the secretary of the VA to conduct a study on the accessibility of VA websites by individuals with disabilities.

H.R. 5786—VA Quality Health Care Accountability and Transparency Act introduced Feb. 6, 2020)

Introduced by Rep. Ruben Gallego (D-AZ), this bill would direct the secretary of the VA to make certain staffing and quality of care data publicly available on a specified VA website, and specifically include statistics related to patient wait times, effectiveness of care, and staffing and vacancy information.

H.R. 5923—Fair Access to Co-ops for Veterans Act (introduced Feb. 18, 2020)

Introduced by Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-NY), this bill would make permanent the VA's loan guarantee for the purchase of residential cooperative housing units.

H.R. 6013—Veteran Families Financial Support Act (introduced Feb. 28, 2020)

Introduced by Rep. Mike Bost (R-IL), this bill would reform the Service-Disabled Veterans Life Insurance program

Veterans' legislation roundup (continued)

so disabled veterans could receive up to \$40,000 of insurance coverage, and veterans under the age of 45 with service-connected disabilities would be able to receive coverage through the VA, even if they had been previously denied coverage by private insurance providers.

H.R. 6027—Restore Veterans' Compensation Act of 2020 (introduced Feb. 28, 2020)

Introduced by Rep. Gallego, it would prevent the federal government from forcing veterans to return separation pay if they later qualify for VA disability benefits.

S. 3378—Reduce Unemployment for Veterans of All Ages Act of 2020 (introduced March 3, 2020)

Introduced by Sen. Kyrsten Sinema (D-AZ), this bill would end the 12-year limit on disabled veterans accessing the Vocational Rehabilitation and

Employment benefit, ensuring that all veterans eligible for this benefit can access it whenever they need to achieve their career goals.

H.R. 6168—Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2020 (introduced March 10, 2020)

Introduced by Rep. Elaine Luria (D-VA), this bill would provide cost-of-living increases for wartime disability compensation; compensation for dependents; clothing allowance; dependency and indemnity compensation to surviving spouses; and dependency and indemnity compensation to children.

H.R. 6141—Protecting Moms Who Served Act (introduced March 9, 2020)

Introduced by Rep. Lauren Underwood (D-IL), this bill seeks to improve maternity care coordination provided by the VA.

As always, NALC is carefully monitoring both good and bad legislation that is introduced and advanced in the 116th Congress and will be sure to keep letter carriers aware of what may affect our membership.

Join the NALC Veterans Group

The NALC Veterans Group is designed to provide NALC members—both active and retired letter carriers—who are also military veterans the ability to connect with fellow NALC veterans and stay informed on issues of importance to letter carrier veterans. It is free to join.

Members receive a pin as a symbol of gratitude for their military service and membership in NALC.

If you are interested in joining the group, complete the sign-up card at nalc.org/veterans.



MISSING

HELP BRING ME HOME

NCMEC: 1380649

Andrew Caballeiro



Missing Since: Jan 28, 2020
 Missing From: Miami, FL
 DOB: Jan 18, 2020
 Age Now: 3 months
 Sex: Male
 Race: Hispanic
 Hair Color: Bald
 Eye Color: Black
 Weight: 7 lbs

Andrew was last seen on January 28, 2020. He was last known to be in the company of his father.

DON'T HESITATE!

ANYONE HAVING INFORMATION SHOULD CONTACT

CALL 911 OR

1-800-8435678 (1-800-THE-LOST®)
 Miami Dade Police Department (Florida) 1-305-471-2400



MISSING

HELP BRING ME HOME

NCMEC: 1386908

Kayla Upshaw



Missing Since: Mar 31, 2020
 Missing From: Fort Myers, FL
 DOB: Jul 7, 2004
 Age Now: 15
 Sex: Female
 Race: Black
 Hair Color: Brown
 Eye Color: Brown
 Height: 5'5"
 Weight: 130 lbs

Kayla was last seen on March 31, 2020. She may be in need of medical attention.

DON'T HESITATE!

ANYONE HAVING INFORMATION SHOULD CONTACT

CALL 911 OR

1-800-8435678 (1-800-THE-LOST®)
 Lee County Sheriff's Office (Florida) 1-239-477-1000