



## Veterans' legislative update

**I**n the first six months of the 119th Congress, lawmakers have introduced a broad range of legislation aimed at protecting veterans, particularly the 30 percent who continue their service as federal employees, many of whom are letter carriers. These legislative efforts directly counter the administration's agenda that has disproportionately affected veterans through federal layoffs, funding reductions, and efforts to dismantle the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

These efforts reflect a bipartisan consensus that veterans require sustained support as key federal programs and protections come under threat. The proposed bills aim to address several critical and persistent issues such as access to quality health care, safeguarding earned benefits, mental health services including suicide prevention, and stable housing.

Below is a sampling of these bills and how they address the unique needs of veterans:

### **Protect Veteran Jobs Act)—H.R. 1637/S. 914**

Introduced in February in the House by Rep. Derek Tran (D-CA) with 45 original co-sponsors, and in March in the Senate by Sens. Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) and Andy Kim (D-NJ), this bill seeks to restore employment protections for veterans affected by recent federal workforce reductions. It provides reinstatement eligibility for veterans who were involuntarily removed or dismissed without cause from civil service positions between Jan. 20, 2025, and the date of enactment. Eligible veterans must be reinstated to their former positions or to other civil service roles for which they qualify. This legislation directly addresses the thousands of veterans

affected by layoffs under the Trump administration. In March, Duckworth and Kim introduced the measure as an amendment to the Republican-led continuing resolution, but it was blocked from passage.

### **Housing Unhoused Disabled Veterans Act—H.R. 965/S. 1415**

Introduced in February in the House by Reps. Brad Sherman (D-CA) and Monica De La Cruz (R-TX), and passed by voice vote, this bill was introduced in the Senate in April by Sens. Alex Padilla (D-CA) and Dave McCormick (R-PA). The legislation would permanently exclude veterans' disability compensation from being counted as income when determining eligibility for housing assistance under the Department of Housing and Urban Development's HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program. This bill would help ensure disabled veterans do not lose access to housing support due to benefits intended to compensate for service-connected disabilities.

### **Veterans Education and Technical Skills (VETS) Opportunity Act—H.R. 1458/S. 1308**

Introduced in February in the House by Reps. Juan Ciscomani (R-AZ) and Don Davis (D-NC), and in March in the Senate by Sens. Ruben Gallego (D-AZ) and Thom Tillis (R-NC), this bipartisan, bicameral legislation expands eligibility for Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits to include hybrid (partially online) skilled trade training programs. As demand grows for high-paying careers in fields such as welding, HVAC and construction, this bill ensures veterans have access to flexible, modern education pathways that align with the evolving labor market.

### **Saving Our Veterans Lives Act—H.R. 1987/S. 926**

Introduced in March in the House by Reps. Chris DeLuzio (D-PA) and Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA), and in the Senate by Sens. Angus King (I-ME) and Tim Sheehy (R-MT), this legislation builds on a version from the 118th Congress. It would authorize the VA to implement a program providing free firearm lockboxes to veterans. Research has shown that limiting access to firearms for individuals at risk can significantly reduce suicide deaths. The bill represents a targeted suicide prevention strategy grounded in evidence-based public health policy.

### **Dennis and Lois Krisfalusy Act—H.R. 1344/S. 1127**

Introduced in April in the House by Reps. Chris DeLuzio (D-PA) and Guy Reschenthaler (R-PA), and in March in the Senate by Sens. John Fetterman (D-PA) and Dave McCormick (R-PA), this bipartisan legislation would allow a memorial headstone or marker to be provided through the VA for an eligible spouse or dependent child of a veteran interred in a national, state or tribal veterans cemetery—regardless of the date of death. Currently, only those who died between Nov. 11, 1998, and Oct. 1, 2024, are eligible. The bill would eliminate this restriction and extend the benefit beyond 2024 for an additional eight years, ensuring equitable and lasting recognition for veterans' families.

### **VetPAC Act of 2025—S. 787**

Introduced in February by Sens. Bill Cassidy (R-LA) and Mazie Hirono (D-HI), this legislation would establish the Veterans Health Administration Policy Advisory Commission (VetPAC). The commission would be

charged with conducting a transparent, expert-led review of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) operations. Its goal is to improve the efficiency and quality of health care services delivered to veterans, ensuring that VHA policies are driven by best practices, data and accountability.

#### **Rural Transportation to Care for Veterans Act—H.R. 1733/S. 784**

Introduced in February in the House by Reps. Marie Gluesenkamp Perez (D-WA) and Juan Ciscomani (R-AZ), and in the Senate by Sens. Jon Ossoff (D-GA) and Susan Collins (R-ME), this legislation would expand eligibility for the

VA's Highly Rural Transportation Grant (HRTG) Program. The program provides grant funding to veteran service organizations and state veterans service agencies to offer transportation at no cost for rural veterans traveling to VA health facilities. This expansion would increase access to vital health care services for veterans in underserved rural communities.

#### **Democratic Veterans Caucus**

In June, 19 of the 99 lawmakers who are military veterans in this Congress formed the Democratic Veterans Caucus—a new coalition focused on defending veterans from the fallout of

the Trump administration's policies. Led by Army veteran Rep. Pat Ryan (D-NY), Air Force veteran Rep. Ted Lieu (D-CA), and Navy veteran Rep. Chris Deluzio (D-PA), the caucus brings together members from across the country to address urgent threats, including security breaches at the Department of Defense, attacks on veterans' health care, and rising global instability. Republicans have a veterans caucus as well.

**For updates on legislation and other congressional action that affects our veteran members, check the "Government Affairs" section on [nalc.org](http://nalc.org).**

## **Veteran profile: Shawn Colleran**

**I**n 1998, at 19 years of age, Shawn Colleran joined the Air Force. Seeking direction in life, Colleran knew he would be able to get his college paid for and take part in career training that would be transferable to civilian life.

He made the most of his six years in the military, working on the flight line as an aircraft mechanic. He earned an associate's degree in aircraft maintenance while also juggling part-time jobs.

At 20 and only one year into his military career, he was promoted to staff sergeant.

"So, I got some good skill sets during leadership training in the military," he said. "It just gave you a sense of taking pride in what you do and looking out for those around you. It reminds me a lot of a union ... the level of camaraderie. As a sergeant, I had people that I was responsible for, and it's not like a 9-to-5 job. You're responsible for those individuals 24/7."

His service overlapped with 9/11, so he was required to serve an additional two years after his four years were up.

While he got a lot out of his time in the military, he was stationed near areas he already was familiar with—his home city of Baltimore, MD, and the Washington, DC, Maryland and Virginia region, as well as Dover, DE. Nonetheless, he found ways for his service to take him around the world. He did brief trips to South Korea, Argentina and Puerto Rico as part of his duties. Additionally, a perk was "space-available" flights, which gave him the opportunity to explore parts of Europe, Asia, South America and the Caribbean while off-duty.

"I have zero regrets about joining [the] military," said Colleran, now Southern Delaware Branch 906 president. He added that his service "definitely gave me the direction, leadership skills that I needed."

Colleran met his future wife while they were both stationed at the



**Colleran while serving in the Air Force**

same base but weren't in the same squadron. At first, they didn't know they were both in the military. They got married in July of 2001 and his wife left the military in 2002 with the birth of their first child. During

### Veteran profile: Shawn Colleran (continued)

their time in the military, they were stationed in separate bases across the world. She was in Osan, South Korea while Colleran was thousands of miles away in the United States. In 2004, he decided to leave the military, in part to spend more time with his family.

He also went back to school for a bachelor's degree in history and underwent surgery for a spinal injury that he sustained during his service. After he recovered, he tried to rejoin the military but was barred due to his injury.

He started looking for a job where his prior service would count toward his benefits, so he applied in 2005 to be a letter carrier and began carrying mail in Delaware in 2006.

After about a year and a half of carrying mail, he became involved in the union. The expectations set for him in the military shaped his perspective

for the way letter carriers should be treated.

"In the military, it's very structured," Colleran said. "There are rules in place, because people can die if you don't follow the rules. They have core values like integrity, as well as service before self, and I did not see any of those from postal management when I came into the post office. It was an environment of bullying and lying. I wasn't going to sit by and let somebody bully a co-worker."

He has held various union positions throughout the years—shop steward, Formal A representative, chief steward and, for the past eight years, as president of Branch 906. In addition to his role in the branch, he serves as vice president of the Delaware State Association of Letter Carriers, and as an executive board member for the state AFL-CIO.

"I've dedicated my life to representing my brothers and sisters in this union," he said.



Shawn Colleran delivering mail (l) and performing branch president duties

#### 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 your military service and membership in NALC.

If you are interested in joining the group, complete the sign-up card at right and mail it to the address included. A fillable version is also available at [nalc.org/veterans](http://nalc.org/veterans).



You continue to serve your country—  
**THANK YOU!**

#### NALC Veterans Group

Complete this form and mail it to:  
NALC Veterans Group, c/o NALC,  
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NALC BRANCH NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_ BRANCH OF SERVICE: \_\_\_\_\_

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to join