

# Legislative Wins for The Legion

From The American Legion Legislative update , December, 17, 2021

The Senate passed a defense spending bill on Dec. 15, advancing the \$768 billion Fiscal Year 2022 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) to the president's desk for final approval. The defense budget includes significant wins for The American Legion's legislative agenda and the nation's veterans.

"There are a number of important initiatives in the NDAA that The American Legion supports," American Legion National Commander Paul E. Dillard said. "First, no military servicemember will receive a dishonorable discharge solely on the basis of COVID-19 vaccine refusal. While we are supportive of the vaccines, we do not believe a veteran's military service should be characterized as 'dishonorable' simply because he or she disagrees"

GWOT Memorial, another one of The American Legion's top legislative priorities included in the defense spending bill is the establishment of a Global War on Terrorism Memorial on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

There is funding for the Troops for Teachers program. The American Legion lobbied lawmakers to include the program in the defense spending bill after it was abruptly defunded as part of the Defense-Wide Review when DoD opted to realign program resources to

higher priority programs. The program was designed to assist transitioning servicemembers and veterans to begin careers as educators in K-12 public, charter and Bureau of Indian Affairs schools. DoD reported the program placed over 21,000 veteran teachers in classrooms over the course of 27 years.

The legislation also makes strides in fighting military sexual assault. The NDAA included changes to protect servicemembers from sexual assault. While The American Legion supports the approved changes, it believes more work is needed to overhaul the military justice system amid the epidemic of sexual assault and harassment in the armed forces.

An American Legion-backed effort to preserve memorials dedicated to chaplains at Arlington National Cemetery was also included in the NDAA. We are also pleased that this law makes it easier to preserve and update Arlington National Cemetery memorials to military chaplains.

The Afghanistan War Commission Act of 2021 creates a nonpartisan, independent commission that would conduct a comprehensive examination of the war in Afghanistan. The commission will examine every aspect of the war, according to the bill's text,

including the political and strategic decisions that transformed a military mission into a nation-building campaign resulting in 20 years of involvement in Afghanistan.

Other matters impacting veterans in the NDAA include the observance of National Atomic Veterans Day, a study on incidences of breast cancer among members of the armed forces serving on active duty, and expanding the scope of Department of Veterans Affairs open burn pit registry to include burn pits in Egypt and Syria.

Congress passed Legion-supported legislation to extend GI Bill protections for student veterans still forced into remote classes by the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, ensuring they'll receive full benefits until next summer. The move is expected to affect about 57,000 students currently enrolled in degree programs, according to Veterans Affairs data.

The Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee sent 25 bills to the floor Wednesday by voice vote. Up for debate were bills related to improving veterans' experience and access to health services through the Department of Veterans Affairs, including legislation to improve access to care for rural veterans, process claims for veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder and improve veterans' health facilities,

# Squadron 5 Kicks Off Flying Flags for Heroes

Pfc Floyd K Lindstrom Squadron 5 in Colorado Springs kicked off the Detachment of Colorado's Flying Flags for Heroes program on December 17th by placing flags at the final resting place of 441 veterans at Evergreen Cemetery. Local news coverage was provided by The Gazette Telegraph in Colorado Spring.



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# Firestone Squadron 1985 Hosts Annual Awards Banquet

National Vice-Commander Mid-West Region for the Sons of The American Legion Juan Torrez was the honored guest as Firestone Squadron 1985 hosted the Detachment Annual Awards Banquet. After a year off due to the pandemic, it was good to renew acquaintances and get back to business. The day started off with a Finance Committee meeting which approved the membership year 2022 budget. That meeting was followed by the Detachment Executive Committee meeting and the introduction of our featured guest. At the meeting, Adjutant Scott Garrett announced his retirement as Adjutant effective at the close of the 2022 Convention. Replacing Scott will former Adjutant Mark Kilstrom. The next few months will be spent brushing of the mothballs and knocking off the rust. I look forward to serving again, I hope to serve you well. Here are some sights from the Awards Banquet and a list of award recipients. *Photos courtesy of Detachment Mom Laurie Kuntz via Facebook*

