

Legislative Division Weekly

GRASSROOTS ACTION UPDATES

This week, we are asking Legionnaires to contact their elected representatives to support the VET-TEC Authorization Act! The American Legion supports this crucial legislation that will train veterans to obtain high-paying technical jobs. *Go to the [Action Center](#) to quickly email a letter of support to your member of Congress.*

Have you had a recent meeting or phone call with your member of Congress? Report your contact today! Click [here](#) to register your Congressional contact and demonstrate the power of The American Legion advocacy in action.

The American Legion's legislative agenda for the 2nd Session of the 118th Congress. To review our priorities, you can check out our [Advocacy Toolkit](#).

NONPROFITS TAKE HIT IN HOUSE EARMARK RULES



This article's original publication can be found [here](#).

House appropriators have made it more difficult for members to secure fiscal 2025 earmarks for some social services programs in their districts, according to new guidance Appropriations Chairman Tom Cole, R-Okla., announced Thursday.

Nonprofits are now blocked from the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Economic Development Initiative grant program, which is where lawmakers of both parties turned after earmarks were banned completely from the Labor-HHS-Education bill last year.

Republicans took issue with earmarks that aided the LGBTQ community that House Democrats had sought in the Transportation-HUD bill last year, and Cole has said he wants to eliminate "political" earmarks.

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“Similar to previous reforms made in this Congress, this change aims to ensure projects are consistent with the community development goals of the federal program,” Cole said Thursday in a letter to lawmakers announcing the new ban.

Earlier this month Cole began sounding out colleagues on the potential tweak that would bar nonprofits from receiving “community project funding” under the HUD grant program, as CQ Roll Call first reported. Cole also rolled out an aggressive timeline for offices to submit their project requests, with a May 3 deadline. Offices are then required to post their requests online by May 17, in keeping with the program’s transparency rules.

Under the new guidance for the EDI account, only state, local and tribal governments are eligible, along with public colleges and universities. EDIs, which receive grants out of HUD’s Community Development Fund, were the largest single source of earmarks in final fiscal 2024 appropriations, at nearly \$3.3 billion. Two-thirds of that amount, or \$2.2 billion, originated in the House, CQ Roll Call found. Roughly \$800 million of those earmarks went to nonprofits including shelters for victims of domestic violence, food banks and Habitat for Humanity grants to build homes for those in need. The change sets the House up for a collision course with the Senate, which allows earmarks in both the Labor-HHS-Education bill and for nonprofits under the EDI account in the Transportation-HUD bill.

House Appropriations ranking member Rosa DeLauro, D-Conn., called the change a “seismic shift” that would block funding for YMCAs, Boys & Girls Clubs and other critical community programs. She said members of both parties would suffer. “In order to accommodate the extreme Republican wing, Republicans are trying to root out any help for the LGBTQ+ community,” she said in a statement. “They are willing to hurt their own religious organizations, seniors and veterans.” DeLauro vowed to undo the shift in the next Congress if Democrats control the House.

The guidance also keeps in place the Labor-HHS-Education ban that former House Appropriations Chairwoman Kay Granger, R-Texas, put into place last year, along with continuing the bans for the Financial Services and Defense bills. Cole had expressed a desire to bring back Labor-HHS-Education earmarks to give the House greater leverage with the Senate in final appropriations negotiations, but he had said it was likely too late in the process to make such a major change.

“We don’t have a lot of time this year to be messing around with format,” Cole said earlier this month. “We’re going to see what we can do to tweak it.”

BIDEN SIGNS UKRAINE, ISRAEL FOREIGN AID BILL

This article’s original publication can be found [here](#).

President Biden on Wednesday signed the \$95 billion emergency foreign aid package, calling out “MAGA Republicans” for the holdup to send aid to Ukraine.

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“It’s a good day for America, it’s a good day for Europe, and it’s a good day for world peace,” Biden said when announcing he signed the legislation. “It’s going to make America safer, it’s going to make the world safer, and it continues America’s leadership in the world and everyone knows it.”

The Senate approved a package that includes \$61 billion for Ukraine, \$15 billion in military aid for Israel, \$9 billion in humanitarian aid for Gaza and other war-torn areas and \$8 billion in security assistance to deter Chinese aggression in the Indo-Pacific on Tuesday after the House passed a package of bills this weekend.

“To my desk, it was a difficult path. It should have been easier, and it should have gotten there sooner. But in the end, we did what America always does; we rose to the moment, came together and we got it done,” Biden said.

“For months, while MAGA Republicans were blocking aid, Ukraine’s been running out of artillery shells and ammunition. Meanwhile, Putin’s friends are keeping him well supplied,” he added, calling out Iran, North Korea and China for helping Russia ramp up air strikes.

Biden noted there were reports of cheers from Ukraine as they watched the House vote in support of its military operation Saturday, adding “it’s not like they don’t understand what we’ve done.”

The president said the U.S. will start sending equipment to Ukraine “in the next few hours” from the U.S. stockpile. He noted the U.S. will replenish its stockpile by making equipment at home, which he argued in turn creates jobs.

And, he noted the “vital” support the legislation provides for Israel and said his commitment to Israel is “ironclad.”

“We will always make sure that Israel has what it needs to defend itself against Iran and the terrorists it supports,” he said, adding the aid intends to prevent Iran from carrying out the “destruction it intended 10 days ago.”

Biden said the bill “significantly” increases humanitarian assistance, sending \$1 billion in aid to Gaza, adding that Israel “must make sure all this aid reaches the Palestinians in Gaza.”

Passage of the legislation comes as Biden faces increasing pressure from other Democrats, activists, Arab and Muslim Americans, and young people to call for a permanent cease-fire in Gaza. Hundreds are protesting on college campuses this week, with demonstrations at Columbia University leading to arrests and the school making classes remote for the rest of the semester.

The president on Wednesday also noted the foreign aid package doesn’t include border security, which was part of the initial \$111 billion national security package requested by Biden last year.

“It should have been included in this bill, and I’m determined to get it done for the American people,” Biden said.

The legislation also includes language to force the Chinese owner of TikTok to divest from the popular app, which more than 140 million Americans use, or face a ban within the United States.

Biden noted the bill passed through bipartisan measures and said that during the time of division, Congress has been able to come together “on the critical issues.”

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LEGIONNAIRE OF THE WEEK

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.

Tom Core, Arizona

Mr. Core, for your steadfast advocacy of Legion priorities, we are honored to name you Legionnaire of the Week!

Mr. Core met with Congressman Eli Crane (R-AZ) in Wickenburg, AZ. In Mr. Core's report, he shared Congressman Crane visited American Legion Post 12 to discuss veteran issues with the Wickenburg area community. Congressman Crane mentioned all the great work being done at Legion Post 12, and then discussed recent testimony by Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs Denis McDonough.

Thank you, Mr. Core, for your report and the time you have dedicated to the Legion's legislative priorities.

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 us at grassroots@legion.org with the details.

LEGISLATIVE DIVISION UPDATES

This week the Legislative Division staff attended several meetings on key issues including the Veterans Justice Commission briefing on military transition, meeting on chaplain retirement issues, and the VETT Act Strategy meeting. The Leg Div staff prepared for the upcoming Modern Day Marine Convention next week, including the Congressional Breakfast happening Thursday morning. The staff met with various Congressional staff to advocate for key bills that the Legion supports for the 118th Congress, working to get the bi-partisan support necessary for successful votes.

Leg Div staff continued to review the FY25 NDAA and VA/MilCon Bills to develop supporting positions to communicate to the House Appropriations Committee as hearings continue. Grassroots outreach took center stage as the Program manager drafted up several new campaigns for important legislation. We all worked to refine the draft products for Spring NEC meeting May in Indy, and continued producing the letters and quotes of support for legislation that the Legion and its members endorse.

GRASSROOTS INFORMATION

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Interested in what the Legion is advocating for in Congress on *The Veteran's Role in Supporting the Military*? Check out our [information paper](#) in the [Legislative Toolkit](#). This is a great starting point for a conversation with your elected officials!

As part of our ongoing Grassroots efforts, LegDiv staff is available to provide **Grassroots Training** tailored to the hosting Department's needs. If you are interested in hosting a Grassroots training event, please contact grassroots@legion.org or ejohnson@legion.org.

Register for Action Alerts today at <https://www.votervoice.net/AmericanLegion/Register>



UPCOMING CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS

As of Friday, April 26th, at Noon ET, the following hearings are scheduled:

April 30th, 2:30pm – Senate Armed Services Personnel SubCommittee, Testimony on DoD efforts to provide pharmaceuticals to servicemembers

May 1st, 2:00pm - Senate Armed Services Readiness and Management Support SubCommittee, testimony on the current readiness of the Joint Force

May 1st, 4:30pm - Senate Armed Services Seapower SubCommittee, testimony on the Navy and Marine Corps Budget

May 2nd, 9:30am - Senate Armed Services Committee, testimony on worldwide threats

May 16th, 9:30am – Senate Armed Services Committee, testimony on the Department of the Navy

May 22nd, 4:45pm – Senate Armed Services Committee Strategic Forces SubCommittee, testimony on the DoD nuclear weapons program

May 1st, 3:30pm – Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, Review of Department of Veterans Affairs Budget

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Previous HVAC hearings can be viewed at: [Calendar Home | House Committee on Veterans Affairs](#)

Previous SVAC hearings can be viewed at: [Hearings - U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs](#)

[View The American Legion Legislative Handbook Here](#)