



# 2024 Legislative Victories for Veterans

Second Session of the 118th Congress

The following veterans' legislation was enacted during the second session of the 118th Congress and represent DAV's Legislative Victories for Veterans for 2024. Many of the provisions included in legislation below are supported by resolutions adopted by DAV members. We appreciate the outstanding support by DAV members and individuals taking action through DAV CAN (Commander's Action Network). The laws enacted by Congress are a direct result of your advocacy efforts and unwavering support for DAV's legislative priorities.

## Appropriations/Budget

- **H.R. 9468, the Veterans Benefits Continuity and Accountability Supplemental Appropriations Act**, provides fiscal year (FY) 2024 supplemental appropriations to the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and establishes reporting requirements related to VA funding and projected shortfalls. Specifically, the bill provides FY 2024 supplemental appropriations to the VBA for compensation, pension and readjustment benefits.

The bill also requires the VA Office of Inspector General (OIG) to report to Congress on (1) the circumstances and causes of certain funding shortfalls that the VA projected for the VBA and the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), and (2) actions that the VA can take to improve the accuracy of the supporting information submitted with the president's budget and prevent funding shortfalls.

DAV supported this legislation, in accordance with Resolution No. 23, calling for sufficient, timely and predictable funding for all VA programs, benefits and services.

**To view the bill, [click here](#).** This legislation was signed into law by the president on Sept. 20, 2024, and became **Public Law 118-82**.

- **H.R. 9747, the Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025**, provides for continuing appropriations and program extensions for FY 2025, ensuring the uninterrupted operation of government functions and funding for various programs.

The act extends the authority for various veterans' programs and services, including nursing home care and mental health programs, through Sept. 30, 2025. Further amendments include extending the funding for a grant program for homeless veterans with special needs; the authority to transport individuals to and from VA facilities; and the testimonial subpoena authority of the VA Inspector General. The act also modifies the authority for monthly assistance allowances for disabled veterans training in Paralympic and Olympic sports, updates housing loan fees, and extends the authority for the transfer of real property.

DAV supported this legislation, in accordance with Resolution No. 23, calling for sufficient, timely and predictable funding for all VA programs, benefits and services.

**To view the bill, [click here](#).** This legislation was signed into law by the president on Sept. 26, 2024, and became **Public Law 118-83**.



### Benefits

- **H.R. 4190, the Restoring Benefits to Defrauded Veterans Act**, mandates the repayment of misused funds to the estates of deceased veterans.

This legislation aims to ensure that the estates of deceased beneficiaries are reimbursed for benefits that were misappropriated by fiduciaries. Specifically, it mandates the VA Secretary to reissue payments to the estates of deceased beneficiaries if the original beneficiary dies before receiving the benefits. These payments are to be directed to appropriate individuals or entities, excluding any fiduciary who misused the funds.

DAV supports this legislation, in accordance with Resolution No. 306, calling for meaningful claims and appeals processing reform.

**To view the bill**, [click here](#). This legislation was signed into law by the president on Nov. 25, 2024, and became **Public Law 118-114**.

- **H.R. 7777, the Veterans' COLA Act of 2024**, increases certain VA benefits, including disability compensation, clothing allowances, and dependency and indemnity compensation for surviving spouses and children to reflect increases in the cost of living. The cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) matches the annual COLA adjustment to social security benefits, as determined by the Social Security Administration, and went into effect Dec. 1, 2024. The Social Security Administration bases its annual COLA on the Consumer Price Index, as determined each October by the Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics.

DAV supports this legislation, in accordance with Resolution No. 159, which calls for realistic cost of living adjustments for veterans benefits.

**To view the bill**, [click here](#). This legislation was signed into law by the president on Nov. 25, 2024, and became **Public Law 118-130**.

- **S. 2513, the Veterans Benefits Improvement Act of 2024**, aims to enhance the services and benefits provided by the VA to veterans, their dependents and survivors. Key provisions in the bill require the publication of all disability benefit questionnaire (DBQ) forms used by the VHA, as well as a VA report on efforts to reimburse veterans for travel expenses related to medical disability examinations and implementation of an outreach program to provide veterans with contact information for non-department providers.

This legislation will also increase the authorized number of judges by three—with seven permanent judges and authorization of three temporary judges for a total of 10 judges to assist with the backlog of cases.

Additionally, to help the Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA) maintain staffing levels, the bill requires a competitive internship program for law students be established by the BVA. The act requires a report on improving access to BVA tele-hearings, including recommendations on reimbursing veterans for travel expenses and potential pilot programs to enhance access.

DAV supports this legislation in accordance with Resolution No. 306, calling for meaningful claims and appeals reform.

**To view the bill**, [click here](#). This legislation was signed into law by the president on Dec. 23, 2024, and became **Public Law 118-196**.



### Burial/Cemetery

- **S. 3126, the Mark Our Place Act**, authorizes the provision or replacement of grave markers for Medal of Honor recipients without regard to their service dates.

The legislation allows the VA Secretary to provide or replace a headstone, marker or medallion for the grave of any eligible Medal of Honor recipient, irrespective of their service dates in the armed forces. This change aims to honor all Medal of Honor recipients by ensuring they receive appropriate recognition at their gravesites.

**To view the bill**, [click here](#). This legislation was signed into law by the president on Nov. 25, 2024, and became **Public Law 118-134**.

- **S. 2181: Keeping Military Families Together Act**, extends the entitlement to memorial headstones and markers for veterans and the authority to bury certain family members in national cemeteries from 2025 to 2032.

The bill extends the entitlement to memorial headstones and markers for veterans and specific individuals, as well as the authority to inter the remains of certain spouses and children in national cemeteries. Amendments in the legislation change the expiration date for these entitlements and authorities from Sept. 30, 2025, to Sept. 30, 2032. This extension aims to ensure continued recognition and commemoration of veterans and their families without interruption.

**To view the bill**, [click here](#). This legislation was signed into law by the president on Jan. 4, 2025, and became **Public Law 118-442**.

### Employment / Education

- **S. 656, the Veteran Improvement Commercial Driver License Act**, authorizes approval of certain commercial driver education programs for VA educational assistance if the program meets specified requirements. Under current law, the VA may not approve enrollment of a veteran in courses for programs that do not lead to a standard degree that are offered at a new branch (i.e., a branch that has been operating for less than two years) of an educational institution.

Under the bill, a commercial driver education program offered at a new branch of an educational institution may be approved if it is appropriately licensed and uses the same curriculum as a commercial driver education program offered by the educational institution at another location that is already approved for purposes of VA educational assistance. The educational institution must submit a report demonstrating the curriculum at the new branch is the same as the curriculum at the primary location in order to be exempt from the current prohibition against course approval at new branches.

DAV supports this legislation, in accordance with Resolution No. 238, which calls for the adoption of programs and legislation to reduce barriers to employment, education and full use and access to other benefits earned through military service.

**To view the bill**, [click here](#). This legislation was signed into law by the president on Oct. 1, 2024, and became **Public Law 118-95**.

- **H.R. 6492, the Expanding Public Lands Outdoor Recreation Experiences (EXPLORE) Act**, contains the following provisions related to service members and veterans (under Title II/Subtitle B—Military and Veterans in Parks, Sections 221-226).



This bill calls for promotion of outdoor recreation for military service members and veterans and requires collaboration between VA and Department of Defense Secretaries to develop public awareness materials to disseminate among veterans and during the pre-separation counseling portion of the Transition Assistance Program. The bill also requires the departments to establish the position of Military Veterans Outdoor Recreation liaison, to assist disabled veterans.

Liaisons will be tasked with entering into partnerships or agreements with state, tribal, local or private entities with expertise in outdoor recreation, volunteerism, accessibility and health and wellness programs for members of the armed forces and veterans with a goal of increasing visits to federal lands and waters, promoting wellness and facilitating the delivery of therapeutic interventions for veterans. Finally, the bill highlights career and volunteer opportunities for veterans, establishes a pilot program and encourages the hiring of veterans in all positions related to the management of federal recreational lands and waters.

DAV supports H.R. 6492 in accordance with DAV Resolution No. 257, which supports legislation to create a work projects program that guarantees federal employment opportunities to service-disabled veterans.

To view the bill, [click here](#). This legislation was signed into law by the president on Jan. 4, 2025, and became **Public Law 118-441**.

### Health Care

#### ➤ **S. 141, Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act**

This comprehensive legislative package includes dozens of bills that DAV testified to support throughout the 118th Congress. The bill aims to enhance veterans' health care and benefits by:

- Improving the Veterans Community Care Program, including access, care quality standards and outreach;
- Implementing a pilot program for consolidating the approval process for VA covered dental care;
- Launching a pilot program to provide dental care for veterans with ischemic heart disease;
- Implementing pilot programs for better care coordination and value-based health care;
- Increasing expenditure caps for non-institutional care alternatives and coordinating with Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly for mental health support;
- Awarding contracts or grants to entities to improve mental health support to family caregivers of veterans;
- Establishing home- and community-based service programs as alternatives to nursing home care;
- Implementing a pilot program to provide homemaker and home health aide services to veterans who reside in communities with a shortage of home health aides;
- Ensuring the availability of home- and community-based services for Native American veterans;
- Ensuring that family caregivers who are discharged from the VA's Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers are assigned a caregiver support coordinator and receive a personalized transition plan to an appropriate program;



- Requiring VA to review programs administered through the Office of Geriatric and Extended Care to ensure consistency in program management, eliminate service gaps and ensure the availability of and access to home- and community-based services;
- Authorizing VA to provide medicine, personal protective equipment, medical supplies and equipment to state veterans homes;
- Establishing a pilot program to furnish assisted living services for certain veterans;
- Enhancing collaboration with tribal health programs and creating a centralized VA resources website;
- Adjusting pay for certain VA health care personnel for the purposes of recruitment and retention;
- Reimbursing rural veterans' ambulance costs;
- Developing a mechanism to capture veterans' preferences for scheduling VA health and community care network appointments;
- Developing staffing models and performance metrics to ensure timely access to health care services;
- Conducting an independent assessment of VA's National Veteran Suicide Prevention Report;
- Expanding educational assistance, employment training and home loans;
- Improving programs and support for veterans experiencing homelessness;
- Requiring that VA Disability Benefit Questionnaires submitted by non-VA providers are transmitted in a machine-readable format;
- Modifying VA IT systems to use automation for claims for temporary disability ratings;
- Providing burial allowance for certain veterans who die at home while in receipt of hospice care furnished by VA;
- Enhancing educational benefits, reemployment rights and housing loans for Native American veterans; and
- Mandating telehealth expansion and security reviews at VA facilities.

DAV supported this bill in accordance with various provisions contained within the following resolutions: DAV Resolution Nos. 18; 101; 224; 306; 336; 338; 343; 348; 584.

For a section-by-section summary of the provisions in the Dole Act, [click here](#). To view the bill, [click here](#). This legislation was signed into law by the president on Jan. 10, 2025, and became **Public Law 118-210**.

### Infrastructure/Facilities Modernization

#### ► H.R. 6324/S. 4176, Fiscal Year 2024 Veterans Affairs Major Medical Facility Authorization Act

The legislation authorizes the VA to undertake several major medical facility projects with the aim of enhancing health care infrastructure for veterans across various locations in the United States. The projects include the construction and renovation of medical facilities, expansion of clinical and parking spaces, seismic retrofits and land acquisitions.

Specifically, facility improvement projects are planned in: American Lake, Washington; Dallas and El Paso, Texas; Perry Point, Maryland; Portland, Oregon; Reno, Nevada; San Diego and San Francisco,



California; San Juan, Puerto Rico; St. Louis, Missouri; and West Haven, Connecticut. Each project has a specified budget, with the total funding not to exceed \$3.3 billion.

DAV supported this legislation in accordance with Resolution No. 193, calling for modernization of VA health care infrastructure.

**To view the bill,** [click here](#). This legislation was signed into law by the president on Nov. 25, 2024, and became **Public Law 118-124**.

### Honors/Awards

- **S. 2825, the Dustoff Crews of the Vietnam War Congressional Gold Medal Act**, authorizes the awarding of a Congressional Gold Medal to the United States Army Vietnam War Dustoff crews for their heroic medical evacuations, recognizing their extraordinary heroism and life-saving actions during the conflict with provisions for medal production and display.

Dustoff crews, consisting of pilots, crew chiefs and medics, were instrumental in pioneering rapid aeromedical evacuation techniques, transporting nearly 900,000 individuals—including U.S., South Vietnamese, allied forces and even enemy combatants—from the battlefield to medical facilities. Their operations, often conducted under extreme conditions and enemy fire, significantly contributed to the survival of countless personnel by adhering to the “golden hour” principle, which aims to deliver casualties to medical care within an hour of injury. The legislation mandates the creation of a single gold medal, designed by the Secretary of the Treasury in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, to be presented collectively to the Dustoff crews. This medal will be housed at the U.S. Army Medical Department Museum.

**To view the bill,** [click here](#). This legislation was signed into law by the president on Sept. 26, 2024, and became **Public Law 118-87**.

### Miscellaneous

- **H.R. 7365 – VETS Safe Travel Act**

The Veterans Expedited TSA Screening Safe Travel Act authorizes free TSA PreCheck access to certain severely injured or disabled veterans, contingent on meeting the program’s background check and security requirements. Veterans who are eligible for this fee waiver are those who are enrolled in the VA health care system and require the use of a wheelchair, prosthetic limb or other assistive device to aid with mobility due to loss, or loss of use, of a limb; full or partial paralyzation; or permanent blindness.

The bill requires the TSA Administrator and the VA Secretary to establish a process for this initiative within one year and to brief congressional committees. Further, the VA and the TSA must develop and implement a process to provide disabled veterans with effective outreach about TSA programs that are designed to improve the screening process for passengers with disabilities.

**To view the bill,** [click here](#). This legislation was signed into law by the president on Jan. 4, 2025, and became **Public Law 118-443**.





## H.R. 5009, National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2025

The FY 2025 NDAA primarily focuses on DOD-related matters, but it does include a few provisions related to veterans and/or VA programs to include:

- Extension of authorities for funding and management of joint DOD/VA medical facilities including demonstration funding for the Captain James A. Lovell Health Care Center, Illinois (Sec. 1421)
- Grants for state, county and tribal veterans' cemeteries that allow interment of certain persons eligible for interment in national cemeteries (Sec. 5001)
- Hello Girls Congressional Medal (Sec. 5703)
  - Telephone operators were the first women to serve as soldiers in non-medical classifications and the job of the operators was to help win the war effort. In popular parlance, they were known as the "Hello Girls".
- Treatment of veterans who did not register for the selective service (Sec. 1108)
  - If a military veteran failed to register for selective service, but honorably served in the armed forces, they are still eligible for veterans preference in civilian federal service as long as they provide proof of such service.

### Report on Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry 2.0. (Sec. 5003)

The report shall include the following elements:

- An analysis of how the redesigned Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry 2.0 improves research and delivery of health care for veterans exposed to airborne hazards and open burn pits.
- A description of how the redesign has affected the accuracy of registry data, including data regarding causes of death.
- The VA Secretary's plans to ensure veterans, caregivers and survivors are updated on research outcomes and informed regarding how to confirm the accuracy of registry data.

### Boots to Business Program (Sec. 873)

- Establishment of a program to be known as the Boots to Business Program to provide assistance and in-depth entrepreneurship training to certain individuals interested in business ownership opportunities. Covered individuals include: those participating in the Department of Defense Transition Assistance Program; a service member in the National Guard or Reserves not on active duty; an individual who served on active duty in any branch of the Armed Forces, including the National Guard or Reserves and was discharged under conditions other than dishonorable; or a spouse or dependent of an individual described above.

### Benefits Helpline (Sec. 5321)

- Requires the VA Secretary to establish and maintain a toll-free telephone helpline that a veteran may call in to in order to obtain information about any service or benefit provided by the VA.
- The Secretary shall ensure that a covered individual who calls the helpline has the option to speak with a live individual.

To view the FY 2025 NDAA, [click here](#). This legislation was signed into law by the president on Dec. 23, 2024, and became **Public Law 118-159**.