

Pay Raise, Housing Help, and More: MOAA's Priorities as Congress Returns From Recess

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The 118th Congress, which has enacted the least amount of legislation by any session [in recent memory](#), returns to work Sept. 9 with a full plate, to include many issues affecting the wider uniformed services community.

Keeping those issues at the forefront among competing priorities and pre-election rhetoric will be MOAA's mission through Sept. 27, when Congress is scheduled to adjourn until mid-November. MOAA members continue to do their part, with thousands of messages sent to lawmakers via our [Advocacy in Action Summer Campaign](#).

[TAKE ACTION: [Reach Out to Your Lawmakers TODAY and Support MOAA's Summer Campaign](#)]

Here's the top of the to-do list for the coming weeks.

The Budget

What: Barring an unexpected, [habit-breaking](#), last-minute, bipartisan agreement, Congress will not pass any of the [12 appropriations bills needed](#) to fund the federal government by the Sept. 30 end of the fiscal year. Entering the September session, the House has made limited progress while the Senate has passed no such legislation.

So What: Without full funding, federal officials – including DoD and VA workers – must brace for a potential shutdown or a [wasteful continuing resolution](#), which would keep the federal government functioning while Congress finishes its work. At minimum, this procedure redirects funds and staff time from the mission, instead putting them to work tracking a moving budget target. At worst, it could lead to increased DoD hiring problems, delays in quality-of-life programs, compensation issues, and much more.

Now What: MOAA will continue its work to inform lawmakers of the toll these continuing resolutions take on those who serve and have served, and their families. In the short term, we will advocate for a resolution lasting only long enough to conclude the budget debate – a full-year continuance could [cause significant damage](#).

The NDAA

What: The annual must-pass National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) cleared the House in June, but the Senate version has yet to receive a full vote in that chamber, and no vote is scheduled. Both versions address [several key MOAA priorities](#), though how they do so varies greatly. One big example: The House bill includes a 19.5% pay increase for junior enlisted members E-4 and below, while the Senate version would boost the pay of servicemembers E-3 and below by 5.5% -- a single percentage point more than the overall pay raise.

So What: The NDAA serves as the legislative vehicle for dozens of new DoD programs and modifications to existing programs. This year's House version includes several proposals from the House Armed Services Committee's Quality of Life Panel moving beyond a pay increase and affecting everything from housing to child care to TRICARE benefits. While the bill has passed annually for more than 60 years, it hasn't always done so [without year-end drama](#).

Now What: MOAA will look for opportunities in the Senate to include additional priorities, including a long-sought fix to an [unjust pay offset](#) faced by combat-injured veterans, in the coming weeks. If the House and Senate establish the traditional NDAA conference committee, we will work with committee members to ensure the bill does the most good for the most members of the total force.

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The VA

What: The Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act ([H.R. 8371](#)) represents a bipartisan agreement on a series of reforms at the heart of MOAA's veteran advocacy, to include improvements in caregiver and survivor benefits, expanded long-term care options, and a better claims process. Despite wide support on the Hill and among veterans' groups, progress on the bill has taken [much longer than expected](#).

So What: If the bill is pushed aside by other year-end legislative priorities, negotiators at all levels would need to start over with the 119th Congress on solutions to these persistent problems. That means a longer wait for members of the uniformed services community who can least afford inaction.

[TAKE ACTION: [Ask Your Lawmakers to Pass the Dole Act](#)]

Now What: MOAA and fellow advocacy groups will continue to work with lawmakers to move this legislative package forward in bipartisan fashion. Continued delays are unacceptable; as the bill's namesake put it, "For all those who have served and all those considering service in the future, this is a moment to show that we can put politics aside, even when it's an election year, and come together to perform a most noble responsibility: to care for all who have borne the battle."