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HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE HOLDS ORGANIZATIONAL HEARING

On 15 January 2013, the House Armed Service Committee (HASC) held its organizational hearing of the First Session of the 113th Congress. The hearing lasted a very short time and was filled mostly with administrative tasks and the welcoming of the new freshmen Members of Congress to the committee. HASC Chairman, Representative Howard "Buck" McKeon, made an opening statement highlighting the many challenges the committee will face over the coming months. He specifically pointed to the looming threat of sequestration and the fact that the Department of Defense (DOD) will most likely be forced to operate under 2012 budget levels for the remainder of the year, due to the probability of another Continuing Resolution (CR) in lieu of a budget being passed through Congress. Of the administrative tasks, the most notable were some rules changes. The Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities will add Intelligence to its name and agenda, becoming the Subcommittee on Emerging Threats, Capabilities and Intelligence. HASC also added new oversight functions to the three subcommittees that handle research (Tactical Air and Land Forces, Seapower and Projection Forces and Strategic Forces). The three committees will now also focus on strategies and planning associated with the sustainment of weapons and platforms.

Chairman McKeon also took time to recognize the service of Mr. Doug Roach, a retired Air Force Colonel, who flew F-4's and F-15's, and was a highly decorated Vietnam veteran. Col. Roach (USAF Ret.) was the HASC lead staffer for the Tactical Air and Land Forces Subcommittee, and was regarded as one of the more selfless, bipartisan and committed HASC staffers. At the request of Chairman McKeon, there was a moment of silence held in Col. Roach's honor.

AUSN CONCERNED WITH DOD ANNOUNCEMENT OF TRICARE PRIME TO STANDARD CHANGES

The Department of Defense (DOD) confirmed this week that it is moving forward with its plan to slash its network of TRICARE Prime providers, which would push more of the cost of health care onto its beneficiaries. In a recent announcement, TRICARE officials explained that any TRICARE Prime beneficiaries living outside of a 40-mile radius of their TRICARE Prime provider will now have to enroll in TRICARE Standard (a more expensive and less comprehensive 'fee-for-service' health care plan). The move is expected to save between \$45 million and \$56 million a year from TRICARE costs; however TRICARE officials are unified in their stance that the intent of this shift is to bolster health care support for core active-duty populations that have been left shorthanded due to deployment requirements of many military medical providers. On 1 April 2013, some 30,000 TRICARE Prime beneficiaries will begin to be forced to enroll in TRICARE Standard. Effective 1 October 2013, TRICARE Prime, the military's managed-care option, will end for users beyond the geographic limit that will go into effect.

AUSN had been following this development since rumors began last fall and pushed for Congressional inquiries. This announcement by DOD follows the inclusion of a provision by Senator Dean Heller (R-NV) in the recently passed Fiscal Year 2013 (FY13) National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) that requires a report on the future availability of TRICARE Prime throughout the United States.

Details can be found at [AUSN's Capitol Hill Blog on TRICARE Disenrollment Mandate.](#)

AUSN NOTES JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF LETTER AND NAVY MEMO ON BUDGET CUTS

Earlier this week, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), consisting of seven members who have all attained the rank of four-star general, finally issued a severe warning to Congress regarding the readiness of our Armed Services and the crisis it is in due to the impact of the 'Fiscal-Cliff' bill, [H.R. 8](#), from last Congress on New Year's Day and its delay of sequestration until March. The main concern voiced by the 28 star-panel of senior military leaders is that our U.S. forces would be, "compromised due to the consequences we would face from the "congressionally mandated, across-the-board cuts facing the Pentagon." The JCS members went so far as to say that, "the military is on the brink of becoming a hollowed-out force." The Department of the Navy, in particular, sent a communication (attached as a PDF below) to Sailors and Marines noting the precarious situation the CR and the delay of sequestration has left the Navy in. In the memo, by Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus, he notes that while, "we expect to receive FY13 Overseas Contingency Operation (OCO) funding; however, those funds are earmarked for support of critical war fighting requirements and would not provide any significant relief to our baseline operating accounts. We project a shortfall of over \$4 billion in our base Operation and Maintenance (O&M) accounts which funds Navy and Marine Corps Readiness."

Details can be found at [AUSN's Capitol Hill Blog on 28 Star Letter and Navy Budget Concerns](#).

AUSN ON THE HILL

This past week, in addition to monitoring development on sequestration and initial hearings on Capitol Hill, AUSN met with staff from the offices of Representative Tim Walz (D-MN-01) and Representative Jeff Denham (R-CA-10) to discuss a few new veterans bills, including re-introducing language regarding veteran status for certain Reserve Component members. In addition, AUSN's Legislative Department participated in the [Surface Navy Association Symposium](#) held in the Washington D.C. metro area, speaking to industry representatives on new developments in defense technology as well as senior Navy leaders. On Wednesday, AUSN's Manager of Corporate Relations and Director of Legislation met received a brief by United Healthcare's Military and Veterans representatives on the status of the transition as they accept the TRICARE West region contract on 1 April 2013. Staff of United Healthcare was very accommodating and reassured AUSN, and other participating Veteran Service Organization's (VSO's) that amongst their goals were to; 1) Minimize disruption of services to the over 3 million beneficiaries that will be affected by this shift, 2) Continuity of Care (collaborating with TRIWEST- former contract holder- on the transition) and, 3) Information Assurance and Security (with all medical records). Working with TRIWEST, United Healthcare has received all the medical history files and meets with TRIWEST on a weekly basis, with regular phone conversations almost daily. AUSN also posted its Calendar Year 2013 (FY14) Legislative Objectives and Calendar Year 2012 Accomplishments which can be read at the [AUSN's Objectives/Accomplishments webpage](#). Finally, NAVSEA chiefs came to visit with AUSN staff this week where we provided a brief on what AUSN is doing for our current and former Sailors.

PRIORITY BILLS INTRODUCED THIS WEEK

H.R. 303, (Official title yet to be released). Introduced by Representative Gus Bilirakis (R-FL-12), the bill would amend title 10, United States Code, to permit additional retired members of the Armed Forces who have a service-connected disability to receive both disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs for their disability and either retired pay by reason of their years of military service or Combat-Related Special Compensation and to eliminate the phase-in period under current law with respect to such concurrent receipt.

H.R. 288, (Official title yet to be released). Introduced by Representative Michael Michaud (D-ME-02), the bill would amend title 38, United States Code, to increase the maximum age for children eligible for medical care under the CHAMPVA program.

H.R. 258, Stolen Valor Act of 2013. Introduced by Representative Joe Heck (R-NV-03), the bill would amend title 18, United States Code, with respect to fraudulent representations about having received military declarations or medals.

H.R. 257, Veterans Health Equity Act of 2013. Introduced by Representative Carol Shea-Porter (D-NH-01), the bill would amend title 38, United States Code, to ensure that veterans in each of the 48 contiguous States are able to receive services in at least one full-service hospital of the Veterans Health Administration in the State or receive comparable services provided by contract in the State.

H.R. 241, Veterans Timely Access to Health Care Act. Introduced by Representative Dennis Ross (R-FL-15), the bill would direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish standards of access to care for veterans seeking health care from Department of Veterans' Affairs medical facilities.

H.R. 235, Veteran Emergency Medical Technician Support Act of 2013. Introduced by Representative Adam Kinzinger (R-IL-16), the bill would amend the Public Health Service Act to provide grants to States to streamline State requirements and procedures for veterans with military emergency medical training to become civilian emergency medical technicians.

H.R. 179, Franchise Education for Veterans Act. Introduced by Representative Tim Griffin (R-AR-02), the bill would amend title 38, United States Code, to allow certain veterans to use educational assistance provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs for franchise training.

H.R. 164, (Official title yet to be released). Introduced by Representative Gus Bilirakis (R-FL-12), the bill would amend title 10, United States Code, to permit veterans who have a service-connected, permanent disability rated as total to travel on military aircraft in the same manner and to the same extent as retired members of the Armed Forces entitled to such travel.

In the advocacy section of the website, you can click on [Bills of Interest](#) to get daily revisions on Congressional action for all AUSN

priority bills. We STRONGLY encourage you all to visit our [Advocacy](#) page, especially the [Capitol Hill Blog](#) which receives almost daily submissions when Congress is in session to see what AUSN is doing for you on Capitol Hill.

We also encourage you and your friends and family to visit the [AUSN FACEBOOK PAGE](#). If you have an account, please Login and "Like" us, which will allow you to see our [TWITTER](#) feeds and other updates from AUSN that shows us monitoring Capitol Hill on your behalf!

NEW LEGISLATIVE ALERTS

There was one new Legislative Alerts sent this week based on hearings and interaction with Congressional staff, as well as traction on the issue. When these alerts are sent to your email, please click on the **TAKE ACTION** link that is at the top of the alert email to send a letter response to your Members of Congress. If you have not seen them, please go to the [Legislative Alerts](#) section on the AUSN webpage and/or check your e-mail for the following alerts which were titled:

Legislative Alert #113-1: URGE the President and Congress to Address the Looming 'Perfect Storm' of Defense Cuts

NEXT WEEK OUTLOOK

Next week, the House and Senate will be in session with the House Veterans' Affairs (HVA) Committee holding its first organizational hearing to adopt rules and changes to how it will conduct business in the 113th Congress. Monday is a recognized Federal holiday, MLK Day, and will also be the inauguration of President Obama. AUSN will be preparing for its Capitol Hill Reception on Tuesday where we will honor the work and service of the late Senator Daniel Inouye (D-HI) as well as the accomplishment of the Veteran Skills to Jobs Act of 2012 by Representative Jeff Denham (R-CA-10). Lastly, AUSN will be meeting with Congressional staff throughout the week, preparing for new bills to be introduced this session.

AUSN LEGISLATIVE DEPARTMENT SEEKING LEGISLATIVE LIAISON VOLUNTEERS FOR 2013

AUSN is seeking TWO VOLUNTEER AUSN MEMBERS per state to act as AUSN Legislative Liaisons and meet with their Members of Congress **AT LEAST TWICE** a year, preferably once in the late Spring and once in the early Fall. The goal will be to have AUSN Members engage their Congressional Delegation and report to the Legislative Director at the AUSN Headquarters on what transpired and what they need. AUSN Headquarters will provide necessary copies of Legislative Alerts, Fact Sheets, Priorities/Objectives Cards and any other information in preparation for meetings upon request.

To qualify for being a 2013 AUSN Legislative Liaison, you must;

- Be an Active AUSN Member (and be a permanent resident of State you wish to liaison with)
- Be willing to meet with your Senators' offices TWICE a year (which have District offices throughout your State)
- Be willing to engage with at least ONE House Member District office TWICE a year
- Report to AUSN Legislative Director, Anthony Wallis, and/or the NEW National Vice President of Government Relations, RDML Robin Graf, USNR (Ret), on meetings and important highlights via e-mail
- Stick STRICTLY to FEDERAL issues of concern (AUSN Priority Card) to AUSN that are nation-wide and benefit all members of the Navy community

IF INTERESTED, please contact AUSN'S Legislative Director, Anthony Wallis, at anthony.wallis@ausn.org and copy RDML Graf, at grafrl@cox.net. Once we have enough AUSN Volunteers (two from each State) we will notify you with further instructions early this year.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS/CONCERNS

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