



**In This Week's Legislative Watch:**

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**DEFENSE BILL PASSES U.S. HOUSE**

**By Edgar Rodriguez, Director of Legislation and Government Relations**

Last night the U.S. House passed the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). The bill will now head to the Senate where it is expected to be approved and then sent to the President for final authorization. This year's NDAA is an imperfect compromise between the House and Senate Armed Services Committees. The House passed its version of the NDAA earlier this year, but the Senate failed to bring their version of the bill to the Senate floor, requiring intense negotiations between the two committees in order to complete the bill on time.

While the current version of the bill does continue to fund the military for another year it also has provisions that we at AUSN strongly disagree with. The current version of the NDAA would keep military pay raises at 1 percent, reduce housing subsidies by 1 percent, cuts subsidies for military commissaries by \$100 million, and freezes pay raises for flag officers. AUSN is currently speaking with officials on Capitol Hill to scale back these provisions and we encourage our membership to reach out to their Members of Congress so that they act in favor of the military service members that continue to serve in harm's way.

**ASHTON CARTER NOMINATED TO BE THE NEXT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE**

**By Edgar Rodriguez, Director of Legislation and Government Relations**

Today President Obama nominated Ashton Carter to be the next Secretary of Defense. Mr. Carter has previously held several posts within the Department of Defense (DOD), with his most recent post being Deputy Secretary of Defense. In that capacity, Carter was the Department's chief

operating officer and chief weapons buyer. A physicist by training, Mr. Carter has earned bachelor degrees in physics and medieval history from Yale and a Ph.D. in theoretical physics from Oxford.

Carter's nomination will ensure that the Defense Department will continue to have strong leadership. He has strong support from both Democrats and Republicans on Capitol Hill and is expected to be easily confirmed as our nation's next Secretary of Defense. We at AUSN look forward to working with Mr. Carter on defense issues pertaining to our nation's Sailors.

### **NAVAL VESSEL TRANSFER BILL PASSES SENATE**

**By Rachel Cole, Legislative Intern**

On December 4th, the Senate passed bill (S.1683) which will provide for the transfer of naval vessels to foreign recipients. The bill will allow for the President to transfer Oliver Hazard Perry class frigates to countries like Mexico and Thailand at the cost of the recipient. This will allow for cooperation with other countries on counterterrorism activities as well as support humanitarian efforts with our allies. This will also increase transparency with the President who will be forced to give notice when these vessels are transferred at least 30 days prior as well as reports on descriptions and analyses on these security assurances.

The bill was sponsored by Senator Robert Menendez (D-NJ) and cosponsored by Senators Bob Corker (R-TN) and Daniel Coats (R-IN) with significant contributions on the statutes of this bill by AUSN. The bill must now be pass in the House then be signed by the President to be enacted into law. AUSN will continue to work to see that the provisions ultimately become law.

### **SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE NOMINATION HEARING**

**By Rachel Cole, Legislative Intern**

On December 2nd, the Senate Armed Services Committee held a hearing to consider the nominations of several individuals: Robert Scher for Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy, Plans, and Capabilities, Elissa Slotkin for Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, David Berteau for Assistant Secretary of Defense for Logistics and Material Readiness, Alissa Starzak for General Counsel to the Department of the Army, and finally Adm. Harry Harris, Jr.(USN) for reappointment to Admiral and Commander of Pacific Command.

The presidential appointees gave brief testimonies and were then questioned by members of the Armed Services Committee. The questions covered a wide range of national security issues including nuclear talks with Iran, Russian influence in the Ukraine, nuclear deterrence, and concerns in the Asia-Pacific.

Senator James Inhofe (R-OK), ranking member of the committee, asked Adm. Harris about the risks associated with sequestration to which he responded by saying sequestration would not only result in the risk of loss of life but also increase the potential of our adversaries' capabilities. Later in the hearing, Adm. Harris also noted the importance of modernizing the submarine fleet in the Pacific Command as well as nuclear capabilities of the Navy overall. Adm. Harris also said 60% of the Navy will be in the Pacific by approximately 2016 and that Hawaii is the key in this rebalance of

naval power. The hearings will continue next week for Scher, Slotkin, Berteau, and Starzak to continue questioning and all will face Senate Confirmation later in the week.

To view the hearing in its entirety, visit the Committee's website at:

<http://www.armed-services.senate.gov/hearings/14-12-02-nominations>

## **SENATE VETERANS' AFFAIRS COMMITTEE HEARING ON HEPATITIS C AND VETERANS**

**By Michael Little, Director of Military and Veteran Benefits**

On December 3, The Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee held a hearing that addressed overpriced charges for new treatments for Hepatitis C, a liver disease that claims about 15,000 lives a year in the United States, many of which are military veterans.

The current drug in use for Hepatitis C, Sovaldi, often costs \$80,000 for 4 months of treatment. An even larger price tag is expected for a new drug called Harvoni, which would cost nearly \$1,200 per pill. After Sovaldi was purchased by the company Gilead in response to its competitor trying to place the drug on the market at half the price it's currently being sold for, questions arose as to whether Gilead purchased the drug knowing it would reap unfair profits. AUSN will continue to monitor these developments and will work to ensure these Hepatitis C medications are available to our nation's veterans.

To view the hearing in its entirety, visit the Committee's website at:

<http://www.veterans.senate.gov/hearings/hepatitis-c-in-veterans>

## **ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS FOR SPRING INTERNS**

AUSN is currently accepting applications for Spring 2015 internships. While at AUSN, Legislative Interns will assist the Legislative Director in not only performing administrative tasks, but also with day to day operations of the office. AUSN Legislative Interns will track and monitor upcoming Congressional hearings. In addition, in cases where the hearings are not televised or streamed online, the interns will go to Capitol Hill and take notes and monitor the hearings of the Senate/House Armed Services Committees, Senate/House Defense Appropriations Committees, Senate/House MILCON&VA Appropriations Committees and the Senate/House Veterans Affairs Committees. Afterwards, the Legislative Director will review After Action Reports (AAR's) before distribution to Executive Director and AUSN staff. Along with this responsibility, interns will proofread letters to Members of Congress from the Legislative Director, Capitol Hill Blog and Legislative Alerts before either the Legislative Director or Intern posts to the website.

Interested candidates can submit a cover letter, resume and 1-2 page writing sample to the Director of Legislation and Government Relations, Mr. Edgar Rodriguez at [edgar.rodriguez@ausn.org](mailto:edgar.rodriguez@ausn.org). AUSN internships are part-time ranging from 2-3 days a week, and Metrorail travel reimbursement is available to interns as well as free parking at our office in Alexandria, VA.

## **AUSN LEGISLATION INFORMATION**

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!

**QUESTIONS/COMMENTS/CONCERNS**

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