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### **AUSN LOOKS AT COMPROMISE FY14 NDAA AGREEMENT BETWEEN HOUSE AND SENATE**

*AUSN took a look this week at aspects of a deal on the Fiscal Year 2014 (FY14) National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) from a press conference on 9 December 2013. Members of the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) and the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) are mounting an all or nothing push on the pre-negotiated/compromise FY14 NDAA through both chambers without amendments. This unorthodox tactic, which began with a House vote this week, amounts to an acknowledgment there is not enough time left in the year to have the Senate debate the bill and amendments and still pass a measure that authorizes, among other things, military pay, weapon procurement and funding for Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) accounts for the war. However, this move could antagonize lawmakers who have been troubled by the lack of a robust debate on the bill and its amendments in recent years. The pressure to move on this bill is on as Congress has passed a defense bill for 51 consecutive years, and the 1<sup>st</sup> Session of the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress doesn't want to halt a 52<sup>nd</sup> consecutive NDAA.*

#### **FURTHER READING:**

Yesterday, 9 December 2013, the Chairmen and Ranking Members of the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) and the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) held a late afternoon press conference on a negotiated new Fiscal Year 2014 (FY14) National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) Bill as a result of the urgency to have Congress pass the NDAA before the end of the year. The HASC and SASC compromise bill authorizes **\$552.1 billion** in spending for national defense and an additional **\$80.7 billion** for Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO). This is consistent with levels authorized in the Fiscal Year 2013 (FY13) NDAA for the base budget and **\$7.8 billion** less for war spending. In order to facilitate a quick and efficient manner to ensure passage of an NDAA before the end of the year, both the House and Senate bills were merged through a series of negotiations at all levels of both chambers, between staff and Members of HASC and SASC. Negotiators also considered, and in many cases included, a number of proposals offered by members of both parties that were intended for consideration as amendments by the full Senate. This compromised FY14 NDAA bill, for instance, would include a managers' package of 79 Amendments that excludes issues deemed non-germane, as well as "air-dropped" items that never received consideration in either body.

Other notable aspects of the HASC and SASC negotiated bill include, in regards to Troop Pay, provisions that state that the negotiated FY14 NDAA supports current law, which is intended to ensure pay for our troops keeps pace with the civilian sector, but provides the President with latitude to make exceptions by his Executive Order privilege. The Administration has notified Congress that the President intends to use his authority to set the 2014 military pay increase

at 1%. The NDAA, unfortunately, neither affirms nor rejects the President's decision. AUSN and other organizations had opposed the 1 percent increase as stated by the President since it rejects current law, based on the Fiscal Year 2004 (FY04) NDAA, which is supposed to tie military pay increases by the Department of Labor (DOL) Employment Cost Index (ECI), which is set at a bare minimum increase of 1.8%. The 1% pay increase will be the lowest pay increase since 1963!

In regards to TRICARE, HASC and SASC in the bill have shown that they share AUSN's position that access to quality healthcare services while serving and during retirement is a benefit earned through current and prior service to our nation. Mindful of this, the negotiated FY14 NDAA once again rejects all Administration proposals to increase TRICARE fees or establish new TRICARE fees. Congress has already put TRICARE on a sustainable path through reforms in several recent NDAA's, connecting TRICARE fee increases to retiree Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) increases. The Department of Defense (DOD's) record of incorrectly calculating TRICARE costs and their repeated requests to transfer billions in unused funds out of the program to cover other underfunded defense priorities raises questions about repeated claims by DOD that the Defense Health Program (DHP) is unsustainable.

Also, The FY14 NDAA authorizes FY14 Active Duty end strengths for the Navy at 323,600; the Marine Corps at 190,200, and all Reserve Component end strengths for the Navy Reserve and Marine Corps Reserve at the President's request levels. In total, the bill authorizes **\$137 billion** for military personnel, including costs of pay, allowances, bonuses, death benefits, and permanent change of station moves. In addition, the bill authorizes **\$32.9 billion** for the Defense Health Program (DHP). The House passed the bill the evening of 12 December 2013 by a vote of 350-69 and is now on its way to Senate consideration.

Details can be found at [AUSN's Capitol Hill Blog on Compromise FY14 NDAA Details](#).

#### **SENATE VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE HEARING ON VA CLAIMS SYSTEM UPDATE**

*On 11 December 2013, the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee (SVAC) held a hearing titled, "VA Claims System: A Review of VA's Transformational Progress." Notable witness present included General Allison A. Hickey, Under-Secretary for Benefits at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); Ms. Diana M. Rubens, the Associate Deputy Under-Secretary for Field Operation at the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA); Mr. Brad Houston, Director of the Office of Business Process Integration for the VBA; and Mr. Richard Hipolit, the Assistant General Counsel at the Office of General Counsel. The hearing was presided by SVAC Chairman, Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT), and SVAC Ranking Member, Senator Richard Burr (R-NC), whom both expressed concerns that despite recent calls of progress by the VA on addressing the claims backlog problems, there is still much work to be done since our nation's Veterans are still not receiving the appropriate care and compensation they have earned.*

#### **FURTHER READING:**

The SVAC began its hearing with opening remarks made by the Chairman, SVAC Committee members, and Secretary Hickey. Chairman Sanders began by stating that the purpose of the hearing was to address the VA backlog. He questioned why he has seen no serious effort on the part of the VA to move from paper to electronic methods of filing and mentioned the staggering number of new claims from Veterans of Operation Iraq Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). He stated that no Veteran should have to wait as long as they have in order to receive the benefits promised to them. He also addressed that while the total number of pending claims is significantly less than it was during the March 2013 hearing, the VA is still not where it needs to be in addressing the backlog. Senator Johnny Isakson (R-GA) stated that the American Legion has claimed to find errors in half of the claims they review and stressed that the VA must be held accountable for making real and lasting improvements. Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) expressed that she was encouraged by the steps being taken so far, but admitted that the VA still has a long way to go, highlighting that many of the Veterans she has spoken with are confused by the VA rating process. Senator Dean Heller (R-NV) reminded the panel that everyone has a role to play in this process, from the Congress to the Veteran Service Organization's (VSO's) to the Veterans, and agreed that Congress must provide the tools needed to bring down the backlog. Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH) said that he appreciates the VBA plan and reminded the Committee that the average claim is now at 167 days whereas Senator Mark Begich (D-AK) continued and gave credit to the VA for the improvement over the last five years. Finally, Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) stressed that accuracy in the claims is most important as he went on to mention that he does not want the VA to sacrifice accuracy in adjudicating claims just to eliminate the backlog and commended the VA in its willingness to move forward.

Next, Secretary Hickey spoke and reminded the Committee that the backlog has been reduced by 36% since March. She

stated that VA employees have increased productivity and quality of work and that the accuracy of medical claims is at 96%. She also mentioned that the VA is moving closer to their goal of completing claims within 125 days by the year 2015. Following these opening remarks by Senators and Secretary Hickey, Chairman Sanders deferred to the Committee members for further questioning and comments. The Chairman began by first inquiring whether they were on track to reach their 2015 goals and if the VA was confident on continuing claims accuracy. Secretary Hickey answered that as long as the VA receives its full budget for Fiscal Year 2014 (FY14), as they are currently under a Continuing Resolution (CR), they will remain on track to complete claims in 125 days and that she is confident that claims accuracy will continue. Next, Ranking Member Burr asked if provisional decisions were included in determining the number of completed claims and inquired as to how long appeals take to get processed. Secretary Hickey answered that provisional claims are included in completed claims and that appeals take roughly 800 days to get processed. Senator Isakson then asked what medical claims cause the biggest problems. Secretary Hickey answered that claims for Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) take the longest to determine. Senator Blumenthal also asked why the VA does not have a time measure goal for appeal, similar to the 125 day goal by 2015. Secretary Hickey responded that the VA does have metrics to increase appeal decision wait times, but they have not yet established a goal for appeals.

## **HOUSE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE HEARING ON COAST GUARD/MARITIME TRANSPORTATION**

*On 11 December 2013, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee (HTIC), Subcommittee on the Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation hearing was presided over by HTIC- Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Subcommittee Chairman, Representative Duncan Hunter (R-CA-50), and Ranking Member, Representative John Garamendi (D-CA-03). Only one notable witness testified and that was the U.S. Coast Guard Vice-Commandant, Vice Admiral (VADM) John P. Currier. The hearing focused on how the Coast Guard is being equipped, or not equipped, to meet its current goals. In Fiscal Year 2012 (FY12) alone, for example, the Coast Guard met less than half of its mission performance measures and over the last five fiscal years, the Service never scored better than 61% with other metrics of mission performance painting an equally bleak picture. The Subcommittee wanted to help make sure these metrics go upward rather than downward and wanted to hear from the Coast Guard on what it needs in order to meet mission requirements and increase its metrics.*

### **FURTHER READING:**

Chairman Hunter and Ranking Member Garamendi in their opening statements, expressed concerns that the U.S. Coast Guard has been, in recent years, increasingly unable to meet the missions it has been given, and whether those goals are truly achievable. Chairman Hunter cited several examples of decreased performance, noting that flight times have dropped by 14% since 2005 and that most Coast Guard equipment has surpassed its service life and is becoming increasingly prone to failure. While recapitalization is addressing this, there is not enough money to see the program's completion, and Pentagon funds for new acquisitions will be cut by 41% next year, compared to Fiscal Year 2013 (FY13) levels. He recommended a thorough review and rebalancing of the Coast Guard's mission and capabilities as he noted that the Coast Guard, "has fallen thousands of hours short of the services post 9/11 mission requirements," which is evidenced by the Coast Guard's failure to meet its own mission performance goals. Representative Rick Larsen (D-WA-02) in his opening remarks stressed that the service is, "underappreciated and underfunded," in its importance to U.S. national security.

VADM Currier opened by stating that he felt that this lack of ability to meet requirements was due to budget constraints, aging vessels, and the size of the Coast Guard. As a result, the service is having difficulty meeting critical homeland security functions such as anti-drug and illegal immigrant interdiction as well as patrolling U.S. shores. These duties come in addition to the wide range of maritime activities in the U.S., and he said that the Coast Guard exists within, "a whole of government," approach to maritime governance, as well as homeland and national security. VADM Currier outlined the Coast Guard's overall responsibilities and strategies to respond to these needs. He said that the Coast Guard is integrated into several branches of governance, serving within the purview of the Armed Services, law enforcement, and intelligence communities.

VADM Currier also stated that the demands the Coast Guard faces are increasing due to sequestration, evolving threats, and increased focus on the Arctic and Pacific. In which the Coast Guard's aging vessels (average age of a USCG cutter is nearly 50 years old) and infrastructure were posing the most serious problems. The recent transfer of 21 C-27J 'Spartan' aircraft from the Air Force to the Coast Guard has helped ease some of the acquisition challenges the USCG faces. Additionally, a Polar Icebreaker is being acquired to address high latitude missions, and the Coast Guard's helicopter fleet is being upgraded with new sensors and structural improvements to further meet their multi-mission

needs. An Offshore Patrol Cutter with a longer operational range and different mission purview is being developed to address changing needs. He spoke about the ongoing recapitalization program to take advantage of all of the Coast Guard's existing resources, especially the medium endurance USCG Cutter, which represents the largest Coast Guard investment. In addition, he voiced concerns over the future of maritime education and U.S. Ocean going vessel safety standards in comparison to other countries. He closed by stating that careful consideration would be needed to sustain the Coast Guard at its expected performance.

#### **HOUSE ARMED SERVICES, SEAPOWER SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING ON ASIA-PACIFIC STRATEGY**

*On 11 December 2013, the House Armed Services Committee (HASC), Subcommittee on Seapower and Projection Forces, held a hearing titled, "U.S. Asia-Pacific Strategic Considerations Related to China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) PLA Naval Forces Modernization." Notable witnesses included; Dr. Seth Cropsey, Senior Fellow at the Hudson Institute; Dr. Andrew Erickson, Associate Professor at the U.S. Naval War College; Mr. Ronald O'Rourke, Specialist in Naval Affairs at the Congressional Research Service (CRS); and Mr. Jim Thomas, Vice President and Director of Studies at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments. The hearing presided by HASC- Seapower and Projection Forces Chairman, Representative J. Randy Forces (R-VA-04), and Representative Joe Courtney (D-CT-02) filling in for Ranking Member, Representative Mike McIntyre (D-NC-07). This hearing was part of an ongoing HASC Oversight Series on the Asia-Pacific Rebalance, launched by Chairman Forbes and Representative Colleen Hanabusa (D-HI-01) last month with the mission of looking into the progress of the "Pivot to the Pacific" strategy outlined in the 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance.*

#### **FURTHER READING:**

The HASC-Seapower and Projection Forces hearing began with opening remarks made by the Chairman, Representative Hanabusa, and the witnesses. Chairman Forbes began by stating that it is critical that the U.S. handles the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) Navy in the best possible way. Representative Hanabusa followed up, recalling a conversation with former Senator Inouye, saying that while the U.S. may no longer control the seven seas, she believes the U.S. will always dominate the Deep Blue Sea. Dr. Erickson opened the witness panel statements by saying that China's Navy has put legal norms second to their national interest and that the U.S. must maintain military capabilities to deter aggressive actions. To deter such aggressive actions, as well as the destabilization of a vital but vulnerable region, the U.S. must maintain the credibility of regional presence and demonstrated capability. This is essential to renew and intensify the U.S. role in the region. The credibility of continuous naval presence and capability is essential. He pointed out that the latest U.S. Maritime Strategy emphasizes that, "trust and confidence cannot be surged." He closed by stating that the Asia-Pacific Rebalance must be comprehensive, credible, and sustained (properly funded). In particular, he stressed that ship-borne trade and ship numbers, particularly of nuclear-powered attack submarines (SSN's), will speak much louder than sermons or sound-bites, both to China, and perhaps equally importantly, to longstanding and newly emerging U.S. partners in the region.

Mr. O'Rourke spoke next and addressed China's naval modernization efforts. He mentioned China's goal of becoming a regional hegemon and how that would complicate the U.S.'s ability to fulfill treaties. Continuing, he went on to describe that a fifth top-level U.S. strategic consideration for Congress is whether the United States has a military strategy for deterring or defeating China. Some observers have questioned whether the United States has such a strategy. According to Mr. O'Rourke, the Air-Sea Battle (ASB) concept is not such a strong strategy, and does not purport to be one, rather, a concept for countering anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) forces (such as those being fielded by China) that could be used to help implement a strategy.

Dr. Cropsey mentioned that the U.S. does not have a current military strategy to deal with a possible Chinese threat. He added that the U.S. Defense budget is being cut in a way that is startling to Asian countries, especially when China has admitted that they want to deny the U.S. access to certain parts of the Pacific. The Obama Administration's much publicized "Pivot to the Pacific" is not a strategy for dealing with China. It's an idea which, if sensibly implemented, would preserve and increase our influence in the region. But so far, according to Dr. Cropsey, all the hard power of the pivot is a minor element of the Administration's preference for using soft power. The hard power consists of a Marine contingent in Northern Australia that remains much smaller than the envisioned 2,500 Marine rotational force, 4 Littoral Combat Ships (LCS) to be based in Singapore, and a U.S. military budget that is being whittled away at a rate that alarms our allies in Asia and the rest of the world. A successful "Pivot to the Pacific" would require more cooperation, especially with our Asian treaty allies, the most important of which is Japan.

Finally, Mr. Thomas gave his opening statement, highlighting that China has increased its defense spending, putting an

emphasis on aerial denial and Air-to-Air Defense (A2AD) and has placed a priority on developing an anti-ship ballistic missile. In 2003, for example, annual Chinese defense spending was estimated by the Department of Defense (DOD) to be **\$45-60 billion**. Ten years later, DOD estimated that PLA spending had increased to **\$135-215 billion**, or roughly 25%-40% what the United States spends on its military annually. The PLA is also continuing construction of LUYANG II-class (Type 052C) destroyers (DDG's), and starting to procure the follow-on LUYANG III-class (Type 052D) (DDG's), which incorporate multi-purpose Vertical Launch Systems (VLS) that can launch land attack, anti-ship, or air defense missiles interchangeably. In total, Mr. Thomas stated that China is likely to have sixteen advanced DDG's (both Type 052Cs and Ds) within the next several years. Some might argue that in light of our fiscal situation this is the wrong time to introduce what amounts to a major overhaul of our power projection forces. Mr. Thomas, on the other hand, argues the exact opposite: that a clear vision of America's future force design should inform the near-term choices the Administration and Congress will have to make about which forces and capabilities to preserve or expand as well as lower priority areas where we will have to divest and accept greater risk.

Following these opening remarks Chairman Forbes opened the hearing up to questions by the Members of the Subcommittee. Representative Michael Conaway (R-TX-11) asked what the witnesses think the Chinese are trying to accomplish by the air defense move. Dr. Erickson answered that he believes they are attempting to establish a zone of exceptionalism, meaning assert their own self-described 'safe/special' zone from outsiders. Representative Hanabusa asked what would be the best fleet architecture for the Asia-Pacific strategy. Mr. O'Rourke replied that there are tradeoffs between the number of ships in the fleet and U.S. forward presence, to include longer deployments, in determining the best fleet architecture. Chairman Forbes asked if the panel thinks China can sustain their current military buildup. Dr. Erickson answered that China is facing a slowdown in the rate of national growth which will make it difficult for China to continue their current growth.

#### **AUSN LOOKS AT/CONCERNED WITH BUDGET CONFERENCE COMMITTEE DEAL**

*Late Tuesday evening, 10 December 2013, the Budget Conference Committee co-chairs, Representative Paul Ryan (R-WI-01) and Senator Patty Murray (D-WA), announced details of their Conference deal to the public, days ahead of the 13 December 2013 deadline. On 11 December 2013, the text of the deal was released and upon review by AUSN, the deal makes strides to help set a fiscal path forward for the next two years, helping to alleviate much of the stress upon the Department of Defense (DOD) with the sequester cuts. However, there is a proposal in the bill that would significantly harm current military retirees and Veterans and has the potential to impact future servicemembers by making harmful adjustments to the levels of retired pay. The Cost-of-Living-Adjustment (COLA) change proposal in the budget deal represents a 20% cut for those who retire at the 20 year mark, a change that will have lasting ramifications.*

#### **FURTHER READING:**

The two-year budget agreement, an amendment to H.J. Res. 59, which is titled, the "Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013," was aimed at avoiding another government shutdown in January by ensuring that the Federal government is funded when the current Continuing Resolution (CR) expires on 15 January 2014. This budget would provide relief from sequestration cuts for domestic and Department of Defense (DOD) spending, while offsetting this by certain cost savings and reforms to also reduce the deficit. This deal came in just a few days ahead of the 13 December 2013 deadline for a budget deal before the Congressional holiday recess begins, allowing time for the deal to be passed by both the House and Senate. In addition, this leaves a small window of time for Congressional Appropriators and their staff to hash out the details of how the increased funds will be spent over the holiday break, ensuring that when the CR expires in January, the Federal government will be funded, through regular Appropriation bills being rolled into an Omnibus Appropriation Bill or even a more carefully structured CR, and another shutdown will be averted for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2014 (FY14).

Overall, the budget deal sets overall discretionary spending at **\$1.012 trillion** for the current fiscal year, about halfway between the top lines passed by the House and Senate separately. This provides **\$65 billion** in sequester relief over the two years that it covers, splitting these additional funds evenly between DOD and non-defense spending. The bill sets FY14 spending at **\$520.5 billion** for DOD and **\$491.8 billion** for non-defense discretionary spending. The budget aims to save **\$28 billion** over ten years through a requirement that the President sequester the same percentage of mandatory budgetary resources in 2022 and 2023 as will be sequestered in 2021 under the current Budget Control Act (BCA) of 2011 legislation. Simply put, short term sequester relief would be in exchange for longer-term cuts that are eased into the budget with more warning than the current impact of sequestration.

However, the budget deal includes an adjustment of retired pay for Veterans. Under the provision, annual Cost-of-



Living-Adjustments (COLA) are modified to be inflation minus 1% as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI). This change would be phased in starting in December of 2014, where Veterans would see a 0.25% reduction, followed by 0.5% reduction in December of 2015. The adjustment represents a 20% cut for those who retire at the 20 year mark, a change that will have lasting ramifications. This represents a more damaging step than REDUX in the 1990's, which had to be repealed because of its negative impact on recruitment and retention in the military, and makes the irresponsible assumption that all retired Veterans will be able to find work immediately to support themselves, despite a demonstrated and very important unemployment problem among Veterans. The House passed the Budget agreement deal the evening of 12 December 2013 by a vote of 332-94, sending it for passage by the Senate, expected vote to be taken sometime early next week.

Details can be found at [AUSN's Capitol Hill Blog on Budget Conference Committee Deal](#).

### **AUSN ON THE HILL**

This past week, in addition to monitoring the developments of the Fiscal Year 2014 (FY14) National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) and the Budget Conference Committee deal, as well as the aforementioned Congressional hearings, AUSN was very active on Capitol Hill. Earlier in the week, AUSN attended a briefing for Veteran Service Organization's (VSO's) and Congressional staff, hosted by the Congressional Veteran Jobs Caucus in the House, co-chaired by Representative Tim Walz (D-MN-01) and Representative Jeff Denham (R-CA-19), on GI Bill issues and concerns, especially in regards to access for new and younger Veterans. AUSN also attended a briefing on a newly created Senate Caucus, the Senate Defense Communities Caucus, co-chaired by Senator Heidi Heitkamp (D-ND) and Senator Johnny Isakson (R-GA), to hear about concerns of the Defense community and how best the new Caucus can help. This week, AUSN also met with staff of Representative Rodney Frelinghuysen (R-NJ-11) who recently replaced the late Representative Bill Young (R-FL-13) as Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on Defense (HAC-D). Finally, AUSN attended events this week hosted by the National Guard Association of the United States (NGAUS), the Wisconsin Congressional delegation and Marine Engineers' Beneficial Association (M.E.B.A.) as well a regular meeting with The Military Coalition (TMC), Guard and Reserve Committee.

This week, AUSN also bid farewell and thanks to our Fall Legislative Interns; Mr. Greg Mercer, a senior at George Mason University who will be graduating spring 2014, Mr. Kevin Brown, a senior at George Mason University who will also be graduating spring 2014 and interested in joining the Navy and going through Officer Candidate School (OCS), Mr. Daniel Torrey, a senior at George Washington University who will be graduating spring 2014, and Mr. Clyde Thompson, a recent Loyola- New Orleans Law Graduate and Navy Veteran, EW Specialist onboard the USS *Leyte Gulf* and USS *Enterprise*, who will be taking his bar exam spring of 2014. The interns provided vital support to the AUSN Legislative Department and we wish them all "Fair Winds and Following Seas."

### **PRIORITY BILLS INTRODUCED THIS WEEK**

**H.R. 3759, (Official title yet to be released).** Introduced by Representative Gary C. Peters (D-MI-14), the bill would amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend the employer wage credit for activated military reservists.

**H.R. 3714, (Official title yet to be released).** Introduced by Representative Matt Cartwright (D-PA-17), the bill would provide for a prescription drug take-back program for members of the Armed Forces and Veterans.

**H.R. 3672, Support our Services (S.O.S.) to Veterans Caregivers Act.** Introduced by Representative Raul Ruiz (D-CA-36), the bill would amend Title 38, United States Code, to clarify that caregivers for Veterans with serious illnesses are eligible for assistance and support services provided by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

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 were three 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 #113-28: URGE President to Continue to Protect Commissary Benefit for Our Military Community**

**Legislative Alert #113-29: SUPPORT H.R. 3493 & S. 1684, Servicemember Transition Improvement Act**

**Legislative Alert #113-30: URGE Congress Reject Budget Deal Proposal that Breaks Military Retiree Promises**

#### **NEXT WEEK OUTLOOK**

Next week, the House is out of session, but the Senate will be in session, attempting to wrap up final items on its agenda before they adjourn the 1<sup>st</sup> Session of the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress (currently set for 20 December 2013, but could be earlier). Items on their agenda include final approval of a compromised House and Senate bill for the Fiscal Year 2014 (FY14) National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) which the House adopted quickly this past week, as well as the Budget Conference Committee deal of Representative Paul Ryan (R-WI-01) and Senator Patty Murray (D-WA), that was also passed by the House this past week. There is a slight chance that the Senate may move on an Omnibus Veteran Bill, which rolls many House passed and Senate Veterans Affairs Committee (SVAC) passed bills into one, however that remains to be seen and AUSN will keep an eye on that development. In addition to monitoring developments of these pending items in the Senate, particularly the NDAA compromise bill and the Budget Conference deal, AUSN will be having a re-scheduled meeting with the Ranking Member of the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC), Senator James Inhofe (R-OK), as well as a meeting with the Deputy Chief of the Navy Reserve (DCNR). AUSN will also be hosting Congressional staff from the Congressional Navy and Marine Corps Caucus to receive a brief on the H-60 platforms and their importance to the Navy. Finally, next week AUSN will be participating in its regular meetings of The Military Coalition (TMC) and the National Military Veterans Alliance (NMVA).

#### **QUESTIONS/COMMENTS/CONCERNS**

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