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AUSN LOOKS AT DOD PROPOSALS IN REPORT ON CHANGES TO MILITARY RETIREMENT

AUSN recently received a copy of the Department of Defense (DOD) 2014 report titled, "Concepts for Modernizing Military Retirement," which was released 6 March 2014. This detailed proposal cites fundamental and far-reaching changes to the current pension system. The changes would preserve the current system's defining feature of a 20-year vesting fixed-income pension. But it would ultimately provide smaller monthly checks. In order to compensate for that, the new proposal would offer three new cash payments to be provided long before old age; a 401(k)-style defined contribution benefit awarded to all troops who serve at least six years; a cash retention bonus at around 12 years of service; and a potentially large lump-sum 'transition pay' provided upon retirement to those who serve 20 years or more. In the broad view, the new plan would lower the total economic value of the military retirement package, but not by much. Specific details vary, but several options show a roughly 10 percent reduction in cumulative lifetime payments. Coupled with long-term reduction with the new cash payments is a strategic decision by Pentagon personnel experts, based on the notion that troops would prefer a plan that gives them more money up front to reduce the impact of smaller pension payments later in life. This report comes as the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission (MCRMC) are currently meeting to make final recommendations in 2015.

FURTHER READING:

The DOD report outlines two design concepts of how DOD has proposed it could modify the military retirement system. For both concepts, servicemembers would qualify after 20 years, and while the benefits would be calculated using a formula similar to the current one, the annuity would be reduced compared to current benefits, thus smaller checks in the long term being paid. Both design concepts plan to offset this reduction by shifting some deferred compensation, which is paid after retirement, to current pay. The difference between the two is most apparent in how they actually dispense pay.

Concept 1 is a two-tiered system, offering partial benefits to members (both Active Duty and Reserve) after their retirement from service but during their employable years. It does not begin to pay members their full benefits, which would be calculated with the same multiplier as the current system, until after the servicemembers reach their 60's. Concept 1 also assumes that most servicemembers hold civilian jobs after retiring from the military, and therefore, are less dependent on the financial support at that time. On the other hand, Concept 2 is a single-tier system that pays the member full benefits in all year's paid immediately following retirement from service. However, members of the

Reserve Component would not receive retirement compensation until reaching the age of 60, and the multiplier for calculating payments would be lower for all members than the one that is used today.

Both concepts would offer two types of supplemental pays: continuations pay after 12 years and transitional pay at retirement, though the amounts would differ slightly in both concepts. The payments would be set at an amount that the reform would not deter recruitment and would maintain the size and experience level of the force by more or less offsetting any reductions in overall retirement benefits. Both concepts also include a contribution-based component as well, the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP), for those who serve beyond 6 years.

For more details, see [AUSN's Capitol Hill Blog on DOD Report on Military Retirement](#).

AUSN ANALYZES OMB SEQUESTRATION STATUS REPORT

*AUSN recently received a report from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) looking at how the Federal government is adhering to sequestration, under the Budget Control Act (BCA) of 2011, as well as how the Administration's Fiscal Year 2015 (FY15) President's Budget (PB) respects the caps set forth by the BCA as well as the two-year budget agreement of the Bipartisan Budget Act (BBA) of 2013. The FY15 PB, for instance, proposes a detailed, account level request that adheres to the 2015 defense and non-defense levels set in the BBA agreement and includes a separate, fully paid for Opportunity, Growth, and Security Initiative. This initiative would provide an additional **\$28 billion** each for defense and non-defense categories and these additional discretionary resources would help spur economic progress, promote opportunity and strengthen national security by providing critical investments infrastructure, education and innovation.*

FURTHER READING:

In the report, OMB notes that sequestration will cut almost **\$18 billion** from mandatory spending programs, including Medicare, in the next fiscal year. OMB stated that Medicare, which is limited to a cut of 2 percent, would be reduced by **\$11.2 billion** in FY15 under sequestration of mandatory spending, which was not exempted from the cuts under the BBA of 2013 that reset the sequester levels for discretionary spending. In addition, the Medicare cuts would reduce reimbursements to medical providers. Other mandatory or direct spending programs that are not exempt from the cuts would be reduced by **\$6 billion**. OMB then concluded in the report that the sequester of non-exempt Medicare spending will reduce those accounts by 2 percent, while non-exempt nondefense programs will be cut 7.3 percent and defense mandatory programs under sequester will be reduced by 9.5 percent.

However, as OMB noted, no sequester of discretionary spending will be required this year or next because of the two-year budget agreement within the BBA of 2013. The law, which was negotiated by House Budget Chairman, Representative Paul Ryan (R-WI-01) and Senate Budget Committee Chairwoman, Senator Patty Murray (D-WA), raised the caps on discretionary spending to **\$1.012 trillion** this year and **\$1.014 trillion** in FY15. Overall Department of Defense (DOD) spending is capped at **\$521.2 billion** and non-defense at **\$492.4 billion** in FY15 under the BBA. Without this budget deal, base discretionary spending would have been **\$63 billion** lower over the next few years.

For more details, see [AUSN's Capitol Hill Blog on OMB Sequestration Report](#).

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE HEARING ON FY15 NAVY BUDGET

On 12 March 2014, the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) held a hearing on the Fiscal Year 2015 (FY15) President's Budget (PB) for the Department of the Navy. Three witnesses were present to provide testimony; the Secretary of the Navy (SECNAV) Ray Mabus, the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), Admiral Jonathan Greenert, USN, and the Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC), General James Amos, USMC. HASC Chairman, Representative Buck McKeon (R-CA-25) and Ranking Member, Representative Adam Smith (D-WA-09), presided over the hearing as the theme amongst the witnesses seemed to be concern about the forces fiscal future. All of the witnesses voiced concerns that readiness, capacity, and capability had been threatened by fiscal constraints. Chairman Buck McKeon echoed throughout the hearing that he understood these budget cut concerns, saying that increased risk equaled a threat to American lives if our military continues to be downsized at the rate that is being proposed.

FURTHER READING (Full AUSN Transcripts & After Action Reports (AARs) available upon request):

General Amos went first and stated that the Marines have had to sacrifice long-term health for near-term readiness. He continued by stating that considering the strategic realignment to the Pacific, the Marines' role becomes even more

important to the nations' strategic defense because of their experience, capabilities, and preexisting strategic relationships in the Pacific. Admiral Greenert began by detailing the Navy's role in the future of America's defense. The recently released Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) updated American defense strategy to be based upon three pillars: protect the homeland, build security globally, and project power and win decisively. He continued by stating that the QDR called for American Joint Forces to rebalance in four key areas, to include the broad spectrum of conflict, presence and posture abroad, capability, capacity, and readiness, and the rebalance of tooth and tail. Because of fiscal constraints facing the military, however, he said that the Navy has been forced into choices between capacity and capability as well as cost and risk. In his view, adherence to sequestration budget levels would result in a Navy that was too small and incapable of completing its objectives. Finally, Secretary Mabus echoed the comments made by Admiral Greenert in his opening statement especially when emphasizing the importance of the Navy/Marine Corps. He continued by reaffirming the role of the Navy in its role of deterrence, especially when applied to North Korea, and its role in humanitarian aid such as the recent Philippine typhoon. The credibility of combat power of the Navy/Marine team, he stated, opened the door for diplomacy, and allowed for the United States to address emerging threats around the globe.

Admiral Greenert followed his opening statement by detailing the future readiness and operations of the Navy. Most notably, he remarked on the U.S. Navy operating in the Asia-Pacific Theater, and the Arabian Gulf. The Navy's priorities are to provide sea-based deterrence, forward presence, the ability to win decisively, readiness to support these objectives, asymmetric threat capability, and the sustainment of a relevant industry base. General Amos followed by making statements regarding the Marine Corps' future. He emphasized the fact that the Corps' greatest asset was the individual Marine. The Corps' partnership with the Navy allowed its expeditionary capability. The General shared Admiral Greenert's concerns about shipbuilding funds, and stated that the future of America's military is naval in character. Secretary Mabus made the point that the 11 carrier fleet is threatened by budget constraints and maintaining the USS *George Washington* (CVN-73) was of great value to the Navy, and something it badly wanted to keep. The Admiral seconded this concern, stating that the difficulty of credible deterrence greatly increased with the loss of the 11th carrier.

Chairman McKeon built off of this discussion by starting the round of questions, inquiring about the future of the carrier force and its role in U.S. strategy abroad. Admiral Greenert responded that the lessened carrier numbers and capabilities would leave the Navy unable to meet current strategic requirements. He went on to state that a carrier presence can have a de-escalating, or even calming effect in certain areas, primary important since the role of U.S. military is to prevent war. Next, Representative Steve Palazzo (R-MS-04) asked the witnesses their opinions of the future of Amphibious Assault Ships, particularly the Landing Platform Docks (LPDs). In response, General Amos stated that the Marines need a 12th LPD and are examining possible alternative ways to meet requirements. Admiral Greenert continued by stating that currently, the Navy and Marine Corps have a requirement for 33 Amphibious Assault Ships, but realistically would need 50 for ongoing operational expectations. Finally, Representative Bradley Byrne (R-AL-01) asked Secretary Mabus that given the proposal to cut the buy of the Littoral Combat Ship down from 52 to 32 and the Navy's goal to have a 300 ship fleet by 2020, which is five fiscal years from now, what would the timeline be for developing a new ship or a new ship design all together and what would the cost be? Secretary Mabus responded that the normal timeline for introduction into the fleet is about 10 years and he couldn't comment on the cost at this time. In response, Representative Byrne continued by say that we've gotten the cost for the LCS down to about **\$350 million** a ship now, and asked if the Navy could produce a new ship for anywhere near **\$350 million** over the time horizon, i.e. by 2020, for a 300 ship fleet? Secretary Mabus responded that the LCS is the only ship that the Navy is currently producing anywhere close to that cost, but that's the purpose of this proposal is to look and see at options.

SENATE VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE HEARING ON FY15 VA BUDGET

On 12 March 2014, the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee (SVAC) held a hearing regarding the state of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), primarily looking at the sufficiency, or not, of the amount of funding allocated to the VA within the Fiscal Year 2015 (FY15) President's Budget (PB). An ancillary subject to this was the VA's recently released "2014-2020 Strategic Plan" for the implementation of new initiatives with these fiscal resources in the FY15 PB. The witnesses at the hearing articulated in detail both the funds directed to the VA as well as the department's plan for utilizing them in FY15. SVAC Chairman, Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT), presided with Senator Johnny Isakson (R-GA) filled in for SVAC Ranking Member, Senator Richard Burr (R-NC), in his absence. The main witness testifying was the Honorable Eric Shinseki, Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs. He was joined by several others witnesses, including MS. Helen Tierney, CFO of the VA, Mr. Stephen Warren, IT Office Executive for the VA, the Honorable Steve Muro, Undersecretary for Memorial Affairs for the VA, the Honorable Allison Hickey, Undersecretary

for Benefits for the VA, and the Honorable Robert Petzel, Undersecretary for Health for the VA.

FURTHER READING (*Full AUSN Transcripts & After Action Reports (AARs) available upon request*):

The hearing started out with Secretary Shinseki's opening statement regarding the direction the VA will be taking in the coming months and years. He noted that in the immediate future, the work of the VA would become increasingly urgent and important, as many veterans are returning home from war. He detailed the **\$163.9 billion** VA budget in the FY 2015 request, which will cover discretionary funds, medical care collections and Veterans benefits. The Secretary spoke about how the Department of Defense (DOD) estimates that military separations would reach 3 million individuals over the next decade, and that the expanding Veteran population will demand more of the VA than ever before. He then stated that the continued goals of the VA for FY15 are to increase Veteran access to VA benefits and services, eliminate the disability claims backlog in 2015, and to end Veteran homelessness by the end of 2015. Secretary Shinseki concluded his opening statements by reiterating the direction of the VA for the next several years regarding FY 15's budget request. He stated that the VA is committed to responsible stewardship and effective use of resources and budget savings and that the VA will continue to grow and meet Veterans needs long after conflicts end.

The hearing continued with questions from the SVAC Members. Senator Isakson asked Secretary Shinseki about the ways in which the VA disciplines its employees for mismanagement resulting in system failure. Secretary Shinseki replied that while mistakes are made at the VA, many employees are themselves Veterans and understand the importance of their work, and that in 2013 the VA removed 3,000 of its employees for performance related issues. Chairman Sanders asked Secretary Shinseki how the VA was dealing with the issue of suicides in the Veteran community. Mr. Shinseki replied by stating that the VA had increased investments in mental healthcare by over 60%. He continued with saying that in the last two wars, a smaller group of people had been responsible for carrying in operations in two theaters of conflict, resulting in more deployments for specific individuals. Undersecretary Petzel followed up these statements with his own response, stating that 15-20% of Veterans returning from Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) or Afghanistan from Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) suffered from depression or anxiety. Senator Jon Tester (D-MT) inquired about the effects of the shutdown on the productivity of the VA, along with the status of the benefits claims backlog. Secretary Shinseki answered that the shutdown was less detrimental than expected because VA employees worked overtime. He also stated that the backlog is partly due to the transition from paper records to electronic records, noting that VA benefits personnel must be familiar with the use of both. Next, Secretary Shinseki was asked by Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) about the efforts to reduce Veteran homelessness. The Secretary replied by saying that local organizations had been utilized to help address this issue and that grants have also been implemented. He stated that he has had regular conversations with DOD, and that their department had provided a list of 72,000 names of Veterans who were discharged under rules that may no longer exist, or were discharged for behaviors relating to PTSD and TBI. Thus far, the VA has found 6,500 names in order to help them receive benefits.

HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE, DEFENSE SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING ON FY15 DOD BUDGET

On 13 March 2014, the House Appropriations Committee (HAC), Subcommittee on Defense met to discuss the recently released Fiscal Year 2015 (FY15) President's Budget (PB) request. The notable witnesses present for the hearing were Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) Chuck Hagel, Department of Defense (DOD) Comptroller Robert Hale, and the Chairman of the Joints Chiefs (CJCS, General Martin Dempsey, USA. The Committee was presided over by the new HAC-D Chairman, since Representative Bill Young (R-FL-13) has passed away, Representative Rodney Frelinghuysen (R-NJ-11). In his opening remarks, the new HAC-D Chairman questioned the Administration's desire to move the United States off a war footing, evident in the FY15 PB numbers, believing such a path would lead allies and adversaries alike to believe the United States had lost its will and ability to lead. He urged his colleagues, including HAC-D Ranking member, Representative Pete Visclosky (D-IN-01), that they must work to prevent the return of sequester cuts, which were exempt for this year due to the Bipartisan Budget Act (BBA) of 2013 deal, but scheduled to return next year. Finally, Chairman Frelinghuysen noted several challenges he sees for the panel: spending resources more efficiently; gaining better control of the military's acquisition process; determining the risks associated with the downsizing of the military; and assessing what risks are tolerable. These themes and concerns were all voiced during the duration of the hearing.

FURTHER READING (*Full AUSN Transcripts & After Action Reports (AARs) available upon request*):

The hearing started with opening remarks by Secretary Hagel regarding his opinion on the proposed budget for the next year. According to Hagel, the budget is a reflection of the drawdown from America's longest war, as combat operations

are allegedly ending in 2014. This new budget, he said, will help define American defense spending for years to come. He said that the budget is designed to prepare the military to adequately address changes in the world, to include new technologies, new centers of power, and a more unpredictable, volatile, and threatening world. Secretary Hagel also stated that DOD is also helping to navigate through a time period of uncertainty regarding the future availability of fiscal resources. The budget, though, forces the military to face serious readiness and modernization challenges. In order to address these challenges, the President also included an Opportunity, Growth, and Security initiative account to the FY15 budget, providing **\$26 billion** in additional funding to increase training, repairs, and upgrade weapons systems. Secretary Hagel said that the budget still requests more than sequestration level funding because it is needed that the budget reflect what is needed to ensure national security. If sequestration level funding returns, however, he stated that such cuts would undermine national security. Next, General Dempsey began his remarks by stating that the future of our military needs to be structured with the correct balance. After coming out of over a decade of continued conflict, Dempsey stated that it is important to sustain and adjust global commitments to keep America safe, all the while dealing with diminishing fiscal resources. This, he states, requires careful prioritizing, readiness, training, and leader development. The General felt that the PB for FY15 is one that represents a balanced, responsible, and realistic way forward. It helps develop a more joint force that is global and well-networked, providing more option for policymakers. He also echoed concerns about the budget assuming greater risk, although leaving the military as modern, capable, and ready despite its shrinking size.

Following the opening statements, various HAC-D Members took time to ask questions. First, Representative Kay Granger (R-TX-12) asked Secretary Hagel about the future of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) in America's military. Secretary Hagel responded that the aircraft was crucial to national security. When asked to elaborate, specifically in regards to other nations such as China and Russia attempting to develop the technology to challenge the JSF in their own 5th generation fighter aircraft, he responded that in building the JSF, modernizing was a top priority and that it was keeping pace with the latest technology. One main point continually made by General Dempsey was the threat to readiness that further reductions would have if sequestration level spending were to return. Next, Ranking Member Visclosky asked General Dempsey to elaborate on readiness concerns. He went on to describe that while saying that readiness was hard to define completely, in context, America's forces were going to need to reset and adjust to relearning skills that have deteriorated. General Dempsey responded that despite great advances in counter-terror and counter-insurgency operations, U.S. Forces are now in need of improvement in large maneuvering operations, anti-air defense, and forced naval entry. General Dempsey concluded that a lack of funding would lessen the ability to improve upon these crucial skills in the future. Finally, Representative Ander Crenshaw (R-FL-04) asked Secretary Hagel about the role of the Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) in the future of the Navy, and why the cuts were made to the program. The Secretary responded that the cuts to the LCS were recommended by the Navy and adopted by him. At the original projected number of 52, the LCS would comprise 1/6th of the fleet, leaving possible lapses in capability by other ships that could have filled in the role of a lower number of LCS vessels. All three witnesses were generally supportive of the FY15 PB, while lamenting the lapses in readiness and inability to fund more ships and airplanes; they emphasized the strength represented by its more modernized state and the built-in connectedness it develops.

AUSN COMPLETES ANALYSIS OF FY15 PRESIDENTS BUDGET REQUEST

*On 4 March 2014, the Administration sent to Congress the President's Budget (PB) request for Fiscal Year 2015 (FY15). The PB requests a total of **\$495.6 billion** for the Department of Defense (DOD) budget, about **\$31 billion** less than FY14 requested levels, but is consistent with the revised spending cap set by Bipartisan Budget Act (BBA) of 2013. It also sets a placeholder figure of more than **\$79.4 billion** for the war in Afghanistan and the global war on terrorism, otherwise known as Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO). Detailed OCO figures per services will be announced in the forthcoming weeks.*

FURTHER READING:

The FY15 PB also increases the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) budget by \$1.9 billion dollars. Overall, for the VA, the PB for FY15 requests **\$65.3 billion** in discretionary funds, a 3% increase over the FY14 enacted level (P.L. 113-76). However, the PB includes an estimated **\$3.1 billion** in collections from health insurers, bringing the total discretionary budget authority to approximately **\$68.4 billion**. The mandatory VA provisions, most of which are dedicated to pensions and disability compensation, total **\$95.6 billion**. Therefore, the PB in its entirety calls for **\$163.9 billion** in mandatory and discretionary VA funding, a 6.5% increase over FY14. As for VA medical care programs, the PB for FY15 would allocate **\$56 billion**, an increase of 2.7% from FY14. The PB request for FY15 proposes over **\$7 billion** for VA efforts to provide expanded mental health services, which include treatment of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Military Sexual Trauma. In addition, it calls for **\$589 million** for medical and prosthetic research to

support wounded and disabled Veterans. Finally, current law (P.L. 111-81) states that certain VA medical care accounts are allocated a year in advance to preserve the continuity of Veterans medical services, during a lapse in appropriations. Consequently, the FY15 PB calls for a **\$58.7 billion** request for FY16 in advance appropriations for VA medical care programs. Finally, the budget is also set to begin reducing the annual budget deficit as a percentage of GDP, with the deficit only being 1.6% by 2024.

Of particular concern are proposals within DOD's budget to reduce military pay raises, lowering Commissary subsidies, reducing the Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) and merging three different TRICARE plans; Prime, Standard and Extra, into one Consolidated TRICARE Health plan while instituting TRICARE for Life (TFL) enrollment fees. The Navy also will see funding cuts for its weapons programs, particularly the Littoral Combat Ship (LCS), F-35 Joint Strike Fighter (JSF), MQ-8 Fire Scouts and P-8A Poseidon's. Finally, despite the decision to preserve the USS *George Washington* (CVN-73), and maintain an 11 carrier fleet, the FY15 PB does note that there is potential to look at reducing our carrier presence down to 10 in Fiscal Year 2016 (FY16). According to RADM William Lescher, USN, the Navy's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Budget, who briefed reporters on 4 March 2014, he stated that maintaining an 11 carrier fleet and all the associated air-wings would cost an additional **\$6 billion** to **\$7 billion** between 2016 and 2019.

For more details, see [AUSN's Legislative Analysis of the FY15 Budget](#).

AUSN ON THE HILL

This week, in addition to monitoring Congressional hearings, AUSN actively engaged in meetings and various briefs. In particular, AUSN's Vice-Chairman, MCPON Jim Herdt, USN (Ret), spoke to the [Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission \(MCRMC\)](#) in an Executive Session with the Commissioners to discuss expanding upon our formal testimony from last fall. The MCRMC, which is seeking input from current and former servicemembers through their website, is tasked with reviewing the current compensation and modernization package for servicemembers and Veterans and making recommendations in a report to Congress, now extended to 2015. Some interesting discussions from AUSN's meeting this past week with them included looking at ways to "modernize" the current compensation package, but not 'cutting' which has been the affinity this Commission has been viewed as doing. It appears that the Commission will be looking, rather, at ways of improving the current system. AUSN is pleased that the Commission is not looking at costs, rather at looking at making things better, improved and getting recommendations and insight from the Military and Veteran Service Organization (MSO/VSO) community. In addition, AUSN participated in a briefing with staff of the new Defense Health Agency (DHA) to receive an update on the continuity of services and status of the transition to the newly created agency. Finally, AUSN met with staff of Representative J. Randy Forbes (R-VA-04) to discuss some of the proposals in the President's Budget (PB) for Fiscal Year 2015 (FY15).

PRIORITY BILLS INTRODUCED THIS WEEK

H.R. 4247, (Official title yet to be released). Introduced by Representative Raul Ruiz (D-CA-36), the bill would amend Title 5, United States Code, to provide that disabled Veterans with a disability rating greater than or equal to 70 percent receive preference with respect to employment in the competitive service.

H.R. 4234, (Official title yet to be released). Introduced by Representative Larry Bucshon (R-IN-08), the bill would direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program to reduce the shortage of psychiatrists in the Veterans Health Administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs by offering competitive employment incentives to certain psychiatrists.

H.R. 4217, Military Commissary Sustainment Act. Introduced by Representative J. Randy Forbes (R-VA-04), the bill would prohibit a reduction in funding for the defense commissary system in Fiscal Year 2015 (FY15) pending the report of the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission (MCRMC).

H.R. 4191, Quicker Veterans Benefits Delivery Act. Introduced by Representative Tim Walz (D-MN-01), the bill would amend Title 38, United States Code, to improve the treatment of medical evidence provided by non-Department of Veterans Affairs medical professionals in support of claims for disability compensation under the laws administered 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 was one new Legislative Alert 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 #113-37: URGE Congress Reject Compensation & Benefits Changes, Navy Cuts in FY15 Budget

NEXT WEEK OUTLOOK

Next week, Congress will be out of session, thus there will be no Legislative Watch. However, AUSN will be very active next week making preparations for our upcoming Navy Now Forum, featuring VADM William Hilarides, Commander, NAVSEA. AUSN is still taking reservations, so please [RSVP here](#) if you are local and interested in attending. In addition, AUSN will be meeting with staff of Representative Ron Barber (D-AZ-02) and other offices. AUSN will also be working on its FY15 Fact Sheets on Navy Equipment and Veterans Issues as well as attending regular meetings of The Military Coalition (TMC) and the National Military and Veterans Alliance (NMVA). In addition, AUSN will be receiving a brief from the F-35 team with status updates of where the program is today. Finally, AUSN will be preparing hearing testimony for a House Veterans’ Affairs Committee (HVAC), Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs (DAMA) hearing on a few pending priority bills which will take place on 26 March 2014.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS/CONCERNS

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