



Legislative Update

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The election results are in and... Nothing has changed! President Obama has won re-election and Congress is still deadlocked with a Republican controlled House and a Democratic controlled Senate that still has enough Republican votes to secure future filibusters. The Republican majority in the House has thinned, not too much, and the Democratic majority in the Senate has expanded, slightly. To see some key departures, please visit [AUSN's Congressional Election Tracker page](#) with the Casualty List of Members of the 112th Congress that won't be here next year for the 113th Congress. Freshmen Members of the 113th Congress can be found at [AUSN's Capitol Hill Blog on New Members](#), which also provides insight as to key Committee leadership makeup and changes. With the elections completed, Congress now heads into a 'Lame-Duck' session where there is a laundry list of 'MUST accomplish' things to do, and very little time to do it.

SENATE PASSES "COLA" BILL FOR VETERANS, ON ITS WAY TO PRESIDENT FOR SIGNATURE

On 13 November 2012, the Senate passed [H.R. 4114, the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment \(COLA\) Act of 2012](#), by Unanimous Consent (UC) which provides a Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) increase, for veterans with service related disabilities. This legislation was the companion bill to S. 2259, sponsored by Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee (SVA) member Senator Jon Tester (D-MT), and was co-sponsored by all but 1 of the 15 members of SVA this past September. Even with the SVA's almost unanimous support for S. 2259, it failed to get enough votes for 'cloture' in the days leading up to the campaign season recess. However, most on Capitol Hill believed its failure to receive final passage was due to outside circumstances and agendas.

With the first day of the short Congressional session, the Senate had a clear understanding that H.R. 4114's quick passage was essential, in that it would allow the Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) enough time to make the necessary adjustments to its system. In a statement released 27 September 2012, the VA said; "Should Congress pass the COLA after that date [13 November 2012], VA would have to make complex programming changes to the system that could not be accomplished in time to pay the COLA increase January 1 [2013]."

Details can be found at [AUSN'S Capitol Hill Blog Entry on Senate Passage of Veterans COLA Bill](#).

HOUSE VETERANS AFFAIRS, ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING ON VETS EMPLOYMENT

On 15 November 2012, the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs (HVA), Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity held a hearing titled: "Review of Veterans Employment Challenges and Initiatives of the 112th Congress." The witnesses included Deputy Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) at the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), Mr. John K. Moran, Deputy Under Secretary for Economic Opportunity Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) for the Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA), Mr. Curtis L. Coy, Chairman of National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA), Major General (MG) Abraham J. Turner (Ret.) and Chairman of Texas Veterans Commission, Mr. Eliseo "Al" Cantu Jr.

The hearing focused mainly on two specific veterans employment programs and the witnesses opinion of their success: the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program (VR&E), which assists veterans with service-related disabilities in employment goals, and the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP), which allows for up to one year of Montgomery G.I. Bill funds to unemployed veterans between the ages of 35 and 60. Although the unemployment rate for ALL veterans (currently at 6.8%) remains lower than the national average, Post-9/11 veterans are more susceptible to unemployment, as shown in their 10% unemployment rate. While these rates are alarmingly high, the overwhelming majority of the hearing cast the programs in a very positive light.

The one concern with either program came from the Chairman of NASWA, about the fact that State Workforce Agencies (SWA's) aren't involved in a servicemembers transition, until they are already out of the service. NASWA would like to be involved at the very onset of a servicemembers decision to transition into the civilian workforce, but is receiving "push-back" from the VA and Department of Defense (DOD).

AUSN RCOH LETTERS TO CONGRESS HELP GET FUNDING NEEDED FOR CARRIERS

On 24 September 2012, AUSN sent a [letter to members of the House and Senate Armed Services and Appropriations Committee](#) voicing concerns regarding two aircraft carriers that were scheduled for regular maintenance early next year. [The Continuing Resolution \(CR\), H.J. Res. 117](#), which funds the first 6 months of Fiscal Year 2013 (FY13) at Fiscal Year 2012 (FY12) levels did not include vital funding for the Navy for the regular maintenance of two aircraft carriers; the USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN-71) and the USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN-72). Two days after AUSN sent the letter with concerns about RCOH funding, AUSN recently learned from Congressional staff in the past week that SASC, on 26 September 2012, had finally reached an agreement of approval from all its members for the reprogramming request (see attached SASC letter below as a PDF). It would appear that since the CR lasts until 31 March 2013, or half the year, the \$68 million for the USS Theodore Roosevelt makes up for the lack of an anomaly in the CR by covering half of the FY13 requirement (or at least until there is a full year Defense Appropriations bill). Second, having funding available in FY12 funds means that the RCOH for the USS Abraham Lincoln is no longer classed as a "new start" and the Navy can now spend FY13 money needed for the refueling from the CR to execute RCOH for that carrier. AUSN, however, is still pushing for Senate consideration and eventual passage of a Defense Appropriations bill for FY13.

Details can be found at [AUSN's Capitol Hill Blog Entry on RCOH Funding Reprogrammed for Carriers](#).

AUSN PASSES NEW LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTIONS AT 2013 NATIONAL CONFERENCE IN NORFOLK

This past October, members of AUSN met in Norfolk, VA for AUSN's Annual Conference. There, the AUSN Resolutions Committee met to discuss a reorganized and improved Resolutions format and process. Reviewing older prior adopted Resolutions and utilizing current Navy equipment needs and goals of The Military Coalition (TMC), AUSN's Legislative Department devised 39 proposed Resolutions. During the Resolutions Committee meeting at the Conference, the Committee revised the 39 proposed Resolutions, going through each one by one, and merged a few together, while adding an additional one to get a final list of 39 Resolutions which will shape the Legislative Objectives strategy for the upcoming 2013 year. Although not fully integrated yet into the AUSN website, the [AUSN National Resolutions that were passed and adopted can be viewed in PDF format here on the website](#).

AUSN ON THE HILL

The past month and half, AUSN has been very active in meeting with Members of Congress in anticipation for the 'Lame-Duck' session. These include staff from the offices of Senator Tim Johnson (D-SD), Representative Howard 'Buck' McKeon (R-CA-25), Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Representative Hal Rogers (R-KY-05), Representative Bill Young (R-FL-11), Representative John Fleming (R-LA-04), Representative Rick Larsen (D-WA-02), Senator Daniel Akaka (D-HI), Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC), Representative Tom Latham (R-IA-04), Senator Jim Webb (D-VA), Senator Richard Burr (R-NC), Senator John Boozman (R-AR), Senator Mark Pryor (D-AR) and staff of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee for both the Majority and Minority. These meetings centered on pending National Defense Authorization Act concerns such as the TRICARE Pharmacy Copay debate and Retirement Commission proposals. In addition, these meetings also focused on Veteran Status for Reservists with 20 years or more of service that otherwise can't be deemed, "Veterans of the Armed Forces." This issue has been a major concern of AUSN and other Veteran Service Organization's (VSO's), of which an [Op-Ed of AUSN's was published on 11 October 2012 in Roll Call Newspaper](#), and we are STRONGLY URGING our AUSN Members to resend [AUSN's Veteran Status Legislative Alert, Legislative Alert 112-8](#).

PRIORITY BILLS INTRODUCED THIS WEEK

H.R. 6577, The Veterans Retraining Assistance Program Act of 2012. Introduced by Representative Bill Johnson (R-OH-06), the bill would amend the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 to improve the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program by providing assistance under such program for certain training programs that are considered less than full-time.

H.R. 6576, (Official title yet to be released). Introduced by Representative Gus Bilirakis (R-FL-09), the bill would amend title 10, United States Code, to permit veterans who have a service-connected 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 are entitled to such travel.

H.R. 6574, The Servicemember Mental Health Review Act. Introduced by Representative Tim Walz (D-MN-01), the bill would amend title 10, United States Code, to require a review of the separation of members of the Armed Forces on the basis of a mental condition not amounting to disability, including separation on the basis of a personality or adjustment disorder.

In the advocacy section of the website, you can click on [Bills of Interest](#) to get daily revisions on Congressional action for priority bills. I 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 re-designed [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 two new Legislative Alerts sent this past week (and month) 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 #112-22: SUPPORT S. 2241, the G.I. Bill Consumer Awareness Act of 2012

Legislative Alert #112-23: URGE the Senate to Adopt House NDAA Language for TRICARE Pharmacy Copay Rates

NEXT WEEK OUTLOOK

Next week, Congress is in recess due to the Thanksgiving Holiday and will return the week of 26 November 2012. Upon their return, the Senate will try to take up the \$630.8 billion defense authorization bill, but AUSN is concerned that as of now, there is no guarantee the measure will pass. "This is a bill we should get done," Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) said on 14 November 2012, and "It is something we have to do now." The annual policy bill, passed for the last 60 consecutive years, is needed to start, stop or significantly modify programs, including weapons, training, construction and compensation for the Department of Defense. Among the many reasons why the bill is needed is that authority for military bonuses and special pays expires at the end of December, setting the stage for turmoil in recruiting and retention if a deal to pass the bill isn't struck. The House of Representatives passed its version of the bill in May, and has been waiting for the Senate to catch up so negotiations can begin to work out a final, compromised measure. Senate consideration of the bill has been delayed because of one big problem: the massive number of amendments the bill can attract.

AUSN LEGISLATIVE DEPARTMENT SEEKING LEGISLATIVE INTERNS FOR 2013

AUSN is looking for unpaid Legislative Interns to start as early as mid-January 2013 and continue throughout the spring. Candidates should have, or be pursuing, a degree in Political Science/ Government Affairs or Communications. Strong writing and personal skills a must as well as an interest and passion for the United States Navy and Navy Reserve.

In addition to administrative tasks, i.e. answering phones and helping to schedule appointments, interns will monitor and write After Action Reports on Congressional Hearings of interest such as House and Senate Armed Services, Appropriations and Veterans' Affairs Committee hearings. Interns will also have the opportunity to attend meetings with Congressional Staff along with the Legislative Director as well as other meetings off of Capitol Hill. The Legislative Director is also willing to oversee a research project of the intern's interest if they are pursuing class credit for the internship.

Candidates can submit a cover letter, resume and 1-2 page writing sample to the Director of Legislation, Mr. Anthony A. Wallis at Anthony.Wallis@ausn.org or fax it to 703-683-3647 by December 10. Schedules are flexible/negotiable and Metrorail travel reimbursement is available to interns as well as free parking at our headquarters off of King Street in Alexandria. Further details can be found at [AUSN's Legislative Intern webpage](#).

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 before the end of the year/early January 2013.

The Association of the United States Navy is continuously on and/or monitoring Capitol Hill, advocating for your concerns and utilizing our strong relationships with Members of Congress, Staff and cooperating with other military associations to tell the Navy and our veterans' story. This is an ALL HANDS ON DECK effort and your grassroots advocacy will help make the changes that need to happen!

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS/CONCERNS

Anthony A. Wallis, Legislative Director
Phone (o): 703-548-5800, (m): 703-517-9310
E-mail: Anthony.Wallis@ausn.org
Legislative Action Center: [Contact Congress](#)

