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HOUSE DEMOCRATS SELECT REP. BROWN TO BE NEW RANKING MEMBER OF HOUSE VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

On November 19, 2014, House Democrats selected Rep. Corrine Brown as the new Ranking Member of the House Veterans Affairs Committee (HVAC). The current HVAC Ranking Member, Rep. Michael Michaud (D-ME) will be leaving Congress in January 2015. In the race to succeed Rep. Michaud the contenders were Rep. Corrine Brown (D-FL) and Rep. Tim Walz (D-MN). Rep. Brown had the advantage of seniority with her being the second highest ranking member of the HVAC while Rep. Walz, a junior member of the HVAC, ran on his experience of being a retired Command Sergeant Major who served 24 years in the Army National Guard. Rep. Walz will maintain his seat on the House Veterans Affairs Committee in the 114th Congress. We at AUSN look forward to working with both Rep. Brown and Rep. Walz in addressing veterans issues in the 114th Congress.

HOUSE VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE HEARING ON INFORMATION SECURITY ISSUES

The House Committee on Veterans Affairs held an oversight hearing on VA's outdated information technology security weaknesses and its plans to address how they will move ahead in the future. The Committee heard testimony from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) and VA's Office of Inspector General (VAOIG) regarding the investigations they have on going with VA's security vulnerabilities and VA's work to address GAO and VAOIG recommendations moving forward. The VA informed the committee that it has dedicated \$60 million to implement numerous processes and programs to ensure it is able to protect veterans' information and address

information security weaknesses. Mr. Stephen Warren, VA's Chief Information Officer, assured the Committee that no causal relationship exists between alleged appointment manipulation and VA's IT issues. To view the hearing in its entirety, visit the Committee's ustream website at:

<http://www.ustream.tv/recorded/55585757>.

HOUSE VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE HEARING ON VETERANS EDUCATION PROGRAMS

On Wednesday, House Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity discussed legislative proposals that would improve the processes through which State Approving Agencies (SAAs) inspect and approve programs for GI Bill participation. Ryan Gallucci, VFW National Service Director, explained how SAAs should have statutory authority to improve new non-college degree programs at not-for-profit schools in the wake of such programs popping up at GI Bill eligible schools and operating under "deemed approved" status. To view the hearing in its entirety, visit the Committee's ustream website at:

http://www.ustream.tv/recorded/55614649?rmalang=en_US

SENATE VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE HEARING ON VETERANS MENTAL HEALTH AND SUICIDE

The Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs held an oversight hearing on mental health and suicide among veterans. The Committee heard from the mothers of two veterans who committed suicide and learned about alternative mental health care programs. VA testified that it has expanded mental health care programs, including joint DoD/VA programs to provide "warm handoffs" between DoD and VA mental health care services for transitioning service members. VA also informed the Committee that a growing number of veterans are taking advantage of mental health services offered through the Veterans Crisis Line and readjustment counseling services through its 300 Vet Centers. To view the hearing in its entirety, visit the Committee's website at:

www.veterans.senate.gov/hearings/veterans-mental-health-and-suicide111914.

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE HEARING ON RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATIONS

On November 19 2014, the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) Subcommittee on Military Personnel held a hearing on religious accommodations for military service members. Subcommittee Chairman Rep. Joe Wilson and Ranking Member Rep. Susan Davis led the hearing. Hearing witnesses included Michael Berry, Senior Counsel, Director of Military Affairs, Liberty Institute; Dr. Ron Crews, Chaplain (COL.) USAR Retired, Executive Director, Chaplain Alliance for Religious Liberty; Rabbi Bruce E. Kahn, D.D., CAPT, CHC, USN (Ret.); Travis Weber, Director, Center for Religious Liberty, Family Research Council; and Michael L. Weinstein, President, Military Religious Freedom Foundation.

The hearing had to be delayed halfway due to votes and the Chairman allowed the Democratic members of the subcommittee not to return due a Democratic Caucus meeting that overlapped with the second half of the hearing. To view the hearing in its entirety, visit the Committee's website: http://armedservices.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=2&clip_id=379

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!

ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS FOR SPRING INTERNS

We are currently accepting applications for Spring 2015 internships. While at AUSN, Legislative Interns will assist the Legislative Director and Director of Benefits 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 the 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 & Director of Benefits. 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.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS/CONCERNS

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LINKS:

AUSN Contact Congress:

<http://www.ausn.org/Advocacy/LegislativeActionCenter/tabid/2187/Default.aspx>

AUSN Legislative Alerts:

<http://www.ausn.org/Advocacy/LegislativeActionCenter/LegislativeAlerts/tabid/2154/Default.aspx>

AUSN Capitol Hill Blog on DOD Sequestration Report: (Currently Unavailable)

AUSN Capitol Hill Blog on DOD Selected Acquisition Reports: (Currently Unavailable)

AUSN FY15 NDAA Legislative Analysis of Markups: (Currently Unavailable)

AUSN FY15 MILCON/VA Legislative Analysis: (Currently Unavailable)