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HOUSE VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE HOLDS ORGANIZATIONAL HEARING

On 22 January 2013, the House Veterans' Affairs Committee (HVA) of the 113th Congress held its organizational hearing to begin working on important veterans concerns. HVA Chairman, Representative Jeff Miller (R-FL-1), addressed the Committee in traditional fashion, congratulating everyone on their new or continued position in the House and their spot on this particular Committee. He also stressed the Committee's past and future bi-partisan communication and work on behalf of our nation's veterans. When Chairman Miller opened the Committee to HVA Ranking Member, Representative Michael Michaud (D-ME-2), he mirrored the Chairman's statements.

The first order of business involved each side introducing their new Committee members. There were 4 on the Republican side and 10 for the Democrats (it was noted that none of these members were appointed; they each had a desire to be on this committee as compared to previous years). It was nice to see that of the 4 Republicans (3 men, 1 woman); all the men were former Veterans themselves with quite distinguished records. Once the introductions were finalized, the Chairman was able to start into the Agenda for the day, which included approving all of the following: Rules for the four subcommittees and jurisdictions (with a few new ratio changes); Subcommittee Ratio for the Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs (DAMA) would be 5:4, Economic Opportunity would be 5:4, Health would be 7:5 and Oversight & Investigations would be 6:5); Committee Vice Chairman (Gus Bilirakis R-FL-12). Subcommittee Chairmen included for DAMA, Representative Jon Runyan (R-NJ-03); for Economic Opportunity, Representative Bill Flores (R-TX-17), for Health, Representative Dan Benishek (R-MI-11), and for Oversight & Investigations, Representative Gus Bilirakis (R-FL-12). Ranking Minority Members for the Subcommittees included for DAMA, Representative Dina Titus (D-NV-01), for Economic Opportunity, Representative Mark Takano (D-CA-41), for Health, Representative Corrine Brown (D-FL-05), and for Oversight & Investigations, Representative Ann Kirkpatrick (D-AZ-01). Once the organizational agenda was completed and all business was addressed, the Committee adjourned.

HOUSE ENERGY AND COMMERCE COMMITTEE HEARING ON AUSN BILL OF INTEREST

On 22 January 2013, the House Energy and Commerce Committee held a hearing titled: "Committee Organizational Meeting for the 113th Congress and Pending bills." The Chairman of the Committee, Representative Fred Upton (R-MI-06) and Ranking Member, Representative Henry A. Waxman (D-CA-30), both welcomed the new Members of the committee, from their sides of the isle respectively, and then went over administrative business. After the

administrative business was completed, Chairman Upton went over a few bills the Committee passed last year, that were not given votes by in the Senate. He expressed his concern that the bills weren't given a chance to be put to a vote and stated his high hopes that they will be given a chance in the 113th Congress.

Of these bills was one by Representative Adam Kinzinger (R-IL-11), who reintroduced it this Congress, now in the form of [H.R. 235, the Veteran Emergency Medical Technician Support Act of 2013](#). Representative Kinzinger's bill amends the Public Health Service Act to provide to States to streamline State requirements and procedures for veterans with military emergency medical training to become civilian emergency medical technicians. During the Committee's debate about H.R. 235, Representative Joe Pitts (R-PA-16) highlighted the bills importance, noting that the Association of the United States Navy (AUSN) supported this bill and had [AUSN's Letter of Support for H.R. 235](#) entered into the record. A few minutes of debate continued whereby the Committee voted to pass the bill and sent them to the Senate for immediate consideration.

AUSN JOINS AUSA AND AFA ON LETTER TO CONGRESSIONAL LEADERSHIP ON 'PERFECT STORM'

This week, AUSN, working with fellow service association and members of The Military Coalition (TMC); the Association of the United States Army (AUSA) and the Air Force Association (AFA), drafted and sent out a [Joint Association Letter to Congressional Leadership](#) about the looming budget implications of the 'Fiscal-Cliff', expiration of the CR and, consequently, sequestration trigger are not dealt with by March. Noted in a [Navy Times article](#) this past week, the letter specifies that vital Navy ships, Air Force Aircraft and Army vehicles would lack the necessary maintenance should these issues continue without any resolution. Furthermore, the letter states that our military's ability to achieve mission success and defend our nation going forward will be severely threatened if Congress does not address the many concerns that make March a 'perfect storm' of defense cuts.

RECAP OF AUSN CAPITOL HILL RECEPTION

This year's Capitol Hill Reception was a tremendous success! AUSN hosted over 200 individuals this year in the Historic Cannon Caucus Room, where in that room in the late 1940's then Representative Richard Nixon of California proceeded over the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) investigation of supposed Communist, Alger Hiss. Opening remarks for the AUSN Capitol Hill Reception were given by the co-chairs of the Congressional Navy and Marine Corps Caucus; Representatives J. Randy Forbes (R-VA-04) and Representative Susan Davis (D-CA-53) followed by remarks by VADM Richard Hunt, Director of Navy Staff, who spoke on behalf of the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO). The reception allowed AUSN to recognize distinguished individuals for their help in passing vital legislation to the Navy and Veteran community. Award recipients included Representative Jeff Denham (R-CA-10) who helped get the Veteran Skills to Jobs Act passed into law as well his staffer, Mr. Chris Del Beccaro who was vital in keeping Veteran Service Organizations (VSO's) informed of the progress on the bill. Ms. Carrie Wofford, a professional staffer of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee received an award as well for her work on G.I. Bill protection legislation. Lastly, the son of the late Senator Daniel Inouye (D-HI), Mr. Kenny Inouye, received the AUSN award on behalf of his father, giving a passionate speech about the Navy, service and the importance of continuing to help the Navy and veterans.

Attendees of the event included many Navy and DOD officials, to name a few; the Director of Navy Staff, VADM Richard Hunt, the Chief of the Navy Reserve (CNR), VADM Robin Braun, the Navy Chief of Legislative Affairs, RADM Michael Franken, Legislative Assistant to the Commandant of the Marine Corps, BG Steven Rudder and the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Manpower and Reserve Affairs- The Honorable Dennis Biddick. Many Congressional staffers and Members of Congress came, in addition to the Congressional Navy and Marine Corps Caucus Co-Chairs; Representative Tammy Duckworth (D-IL-08), Representative Scott Rigell (R-VA-02), Representative Jim Bridenstine (R-OK-01), Representative Julia Brownley (D-CA-26), Representative Joe Courtney (D-CT-02), Representative Colleen Hanabusa (D-HI-01), Representative Mike Turner (R-OH-10), Representative Marc Vessey (D-TX-33), Representative John Delaney (D-MD-06), Representative Walter Jones (R-NC-03), Representative Adrian Smith (R-NE-03), Representative Rob Wittman (R-VA-01), Representative Joe Heck (R-NV-03), Representative Adam Kinzinger (R-IL-16), Representative Ted Poe (R-TX-02), Representative Mike Coffman (R-CO-06), Representative Joaquin Castro (D-TX-20), Representative Dan Benishek (R-MI-01), Representative Bill Johnson (R-OH-06), Representative Bob Latta (R-OH-05), Representative Gloria Negrete McLeod (D-CA-35), Representative Doug LaMalfa (R-CA-01), Representative Tony Cardenas (D-CA-29), Representative Patrick Murphy (D-FL-18) and Representative Dan Maffei (D-NY-24). Photos can be viewed at [AUSN's Capitol Hill Reception 2013 Photo Album](#).

AUSN ON THE HILL

This week, in addition to monitoring organizational hearing on Capitol Hill and the Capitol Hill Reception, AUSN was meeting with Congressional staff on moving forward important initiatives and helping to craft legislation. AUSN met with staff from the offices of Senator Mark Pryor (D-AR), to discuss veteran legislation such as a new veteran status for reservists bill to be introduced this new Congress, as well as staff from Senator John Boozman (R-AR) and staff from Representative Duncan Hunter (R-CA-50) to discuss veteran bills and equipment needs of the Navy and Marine Corps.

PRIORITY BILLS INTRODUCED THIS WEEK

S. 140, (Official title yet to be released). Introduced by Senator Max Baucus (D-MT), the bill would amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend the work opportunity credit to certain recently discharged veterans, to improve the coordination of veteran job training services between the Department of Labor, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Department of Defense, to require transparency for Executive departments in meeting the Government-wide goals for contracting with small business concerns owned and controlled by service-disabled veterans.

S. 6, Putting Our Veterans Back to Work Act of 2013. Introduced by Senator Harry Reid (D-NV), the bill would reauthorize the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011, to provide assistance to small businesses owned by veterans, to improve enforcement of employment and reemployment rights of members of the uniformed services.

H.R. 385, (Official title yet to be released). Introduced by Representative Al Green (D-TX-09), the bill would establish a pilot program to authorize the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development to make grants to nonprofit organizations to rehabilitate and modify homes of disabled and low-income veterans.

H.R. 368, (Official title yet to be released). Introduced by Representative Dan Benishek (R-MI-01), the bill would amend title 10, United States Code, to require an audiometric test of each member of the Armed Forces before the separation of the member.

H.R. 357, G.I. Bill Tuition Fairness Act of 2013. Introduced by Representative Jeff Miller (R-FL-01), the bill would amend title 38, United States Code, to require courses of education provided by public institutions of higher education that are approved for purposes of the educational assistance programs administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to charge veterans tuition and fees at the in-State tuition rate.

H.R. 333, Disabled Veterans Tax Termination Act. Introduced by Representative Sanford Bishop (D-GA-02), the bill would amend title 10, United States Code, to permit retired members of the Armed Forces who have a service-connected disability rated less than 50 percent to receive concurrent payment of both retired pay and veterans' disability compensation, to eliminate the phase-in period for concurrent receipt, to extend eligibility for concurrent receipt to chapter 61 disability retirees with less than 20 years of service.

H.R. 331, (Official title yet to be released). Introduced by Representative Ken Calvert (R-CA-42), the bill would direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to permit the centralized reporting of veteran enrollment by certain groups, districts, and consortiums of educational institutions.

H.R. 386, (Official title yet to be released). Introduced by Representative Al Green (D-TX-09), the bill would provide housing assistance for very low-income veterans.

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 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 no 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.

NEXT WEEK OUTLOOK

Next week, the House is expected to be in recess, while the Senate is expected to remain in session to work on a few of its organizational matters. AUSN will be attending its regular TMC and National Military Veterans Alliance (NMVA) meetings along with reviewing volunteers for its Legislative Liaison Program (see below) that we have been accepting resumes from AUSN Members across the country. In addition, AUSN will be participating in a press conference with Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman, Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT), regarding looking at legislation on changing the Chained CPI and calculating Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for veterans. AUSN will be monitoring and reporting on the details of this press conference.

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.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS/CONCERNS

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