



Legislative Update

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SENATE PASSES SEQUESTRATION TRANSPARENCY BILL

On the evening of 25 July 2012, the Senate passed by unanimous consent [H.R. 5872, the Sequestration Transparency Act](#). This follows the House's passage of the bill last week, by a bi-partisan vote of 414-2, with the bill now on its way for the President's signature. The bill directs the President to provide a report within 30 days that details the sequester required by the Budget Control Act (BCA) of 2011 and its effect and impact on Federal agencies and how it will be carried out. The impending sequestration would have catastrophic effects on our armed forces, veterans, and national defense. House Majority Leader, Representative Eric Cantor (R-VA-07), said that, "These cuts will harm important domestic priorities such as education, medical research and law enforcement.... While [the House's] vote is a step in the right direction, the real goal remains of reaching a bipartisan solution to replace these cuts with other common sense savings. This is why last week I along with my Republican leadership colleagues in the House and Senate wrote President Obama asking him to work with us on a solution." Although the bill's mandated report, after H.R. 5872 is signed, will provide more clarity, AUSN remains concerned that the problem of delaying and/or (most importantly) stopping sequestration to DOD remains to be addressed.

Details can be found by going to [AUSN's Capitol Hill Blog entry on H.R. 5872's Senate passage](#).

JOINT HOUSE ARMED SERVICES AND VETERANS AFFAIRS HEARING ON MILITARY TRANSITION

On Wednesday, 25 June 2012, the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) and the House Veterans' Affairs Committee (HVA) held a joint hearing titled, "Back from the Battlefield: Department of Defense (DOD) and Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) Collaboration to Assist Servicemembers Returning to Civilian Life." The witnesses were Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) Leon Panetta and Secretary of Veterans' Affairs Eric Shinseki. The joint hearing focused on Congressional action with regards to veterans' affairs, and feedback from the witnesses about the development of their partnership to a more efficient system between the two departments.

A major subject of the hearing was the growing rate of servicemember suicides; a recent [New York Times article](#) was referenced several times. SECDEF Panetta and Secretary Shinseki both concurred that addressing the high rate of suicides amongst the ranks of our servicemembers and veterans is, and will be, a top priority for both the DOD and the VA. They said efforts to rid the stigma about Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) will help curb the rate of suicides. Both Secretaries also noted that the DOD and VA are facing a major shortage of mental health clinicians. SECDEF Panetta stated that a strong sense of "built-in resistance to change" is prevalent in both departments, inhibiting changes to procedures and programs. When asked about the development of the shared electronic database of veterans' information between the two departments, Panetta responded, "When operational, that system will be the single source for servicemembers and veterans to access their medical history and for clinicians to use that history at any DOD and VA medical facility." However, some Members of Congress remained skeptical. Representative Jeff Miller (R-FL-01), HVA Chairman, responded that, "Despite repeated assertions about the need for VA and [the Department of Defense] to share medical and other information electronically, it seems the goalposts continue to move over and over again on when this is finally going to take place." Other issues discussed in the hearing included military sexual trauma (MST) and the mental health care needed for victims, homelessness among veterans, and processing disability claims.

SECDEF Panetta and Secretary Shinseki were both questioned about the effects of sequestration with regards to veteran services. Secretary Shinseki stated that he is under the belief that the VA's compensation system will not be affected by sequestration, as ruled by the President's Office of Management and Budget (OMB) last April. However, he is unaware of how the VA's *administrative system will be affected, since it is the only part of the VA that isn't protected from sequestration.*

SECDEF Panetta was asked what Congressional action he wanted taken to help achieve his goals as SECDEF. Panetta responded he believes all the correct standards and policies are in place, adding that both departments are currently on pace to institute the types of work-places that foster environments of change, and most importantly better services to servicemembers and veterans.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES RELEASES DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS BILL TEXT

Last week, AUSN did a Capitol Hill Blog on the passage of the [Fiscal Year 2013 \(FY13\) Defense Appropriations Bill, H.R. 5856](#) on 19 July 2012 by a vote of 326-90. The revised bill text was released early this week. In total, the House provided \$518.1 billion in non-war funding, the same as the Fiscal Year 2012 (FY12) level and \$2 billion above the President's Budget Request. This is because of an amendment adopted by the House that freezes Pentagon spending at last year's level by Representative Mick Mulvaney (R-SC-05) and Representative Barney Frank (D-MA-04). In addition, the markup contains \$87.7 billion for Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) for Defense activities related to the Global War on Terror, which is \$700 million below the President's Budget Request. Two other notable adopted amendments are; prohibits funds from being used to plan or implement BRAC, and prohibits the enrollment fee for TRICARE for Life program.

The Senate is expected to markup its Defense Appropriations bill next week.

Details of the bill text can be found by going to [AUSN's House Passed Defense Appropriations Analysis Page](#).

AUSN ON THE HILL

This week, AUSN was very active on the hill, not only monitoring hearings and House and Senate floor activities, but also meeting with numerous Congressional offices as Defense Appropriations progresses in the Senate. Offices that AUSN met with this week included Senator Richard Shelby (R-AL), Senator John Hoeven (R-ND), Senator Carl Levin (D-MI)- Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, and Representative Maurice Hinchey (D-NY-22). In these meetings sequestration was a popular conversation, as was veteran status, retroactive retirement credit for Reserve Component (despite popular consensus in meetings it was a non-starter due to the costs associated with it) and Navy equipment and procurement needs. In addition, AUSN met with the new Deputy Chief of the Navy Reserve, CAPT Eric Young, who will be receiving his star soon as well as the opportunity to meet and discuss sequestration with the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) Chairman, Representative Howard 'Buck' McKeon (R-CA-25). In addition, this week was the Navy Now Forum hosted by AUSN at the Ronald Reagan Building in DC, where VADM Kevin McCoy, NAVSEA Commander, spoke about where the Navy is positioned presently for surface warfare, their needs and capabilities to our Board of Directors, Corporate partners and other distinguished guests and members of AUSN. The [September Navy Now Forum](#) will feature the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), Admiral Jonathan Greenert and will focus on Force Structure.

PRIORITY BILLS INTRODUCED THIS WEEK

H.R. 6188, Military Family Leave Act of 2012. Introduced by Representative Russ Carnahan (D-MO-03), the bill would amend title 38, United States Code, to grant family of members of the uniformed services temporary annual leave during the deployment of such members.

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 was one new Legislative Alert were 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 #112-19: URGE the House to Pass H.R. 1627, the Honoring American Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act of 2012

INTERN ANNOUNCEMENT

AUSN is looking for unpaid Legislative Interns to start as early as late August/early September and continue throughout the fall. 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 August 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](#).

NEXT WEEK OUTLOOK

In addition to a few hill meetings next week on both the House and Senate side, sources on Capitol Hill have indicated that the House is expected to vote on passage of the veterans' comprehensive package legislation, [H.R. 1627, the Honoring American Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act of 2012](#). AUSN wrote a [Capitol Hill Blog detailing some of the key provisions of interest in H.R. 1627](#) that we've been tracking this past Congress that will be sent to the President once the House considers and passes it next week. In addition, AUSN has heard that the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense and the full Appropriations Committee will mark up the Fiscal Year 2013 (FY13) Defense Appropriations bill next week, perhaps on Tuesday and Thursday, respectively. That had been the plan for some time, but there was growing talk that it might not happen. It's now looking like the Senate's consideration of the FY13 National Defense Authorization Act will have to wait until the fall, after Congress returns from its August recess month. Next week, there will also be a few notable hearings including, hopefully, the hearing on Navy Shipbuilding by the House Armed Services Committee (which has twice been re-scheduled) and a House Veterans Affairs Committee hearing on veteran owned businesses.

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

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