

**AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY
DEPARTMENT OF NEW JERSEY
Legislation Committee**

December 1, 2018

Fall 2018 Highlights:

The House of Representative went in recess until after Election Day. Therefore no business was conducted so they could campaign. The Senate was in Session but the primary concern was the Supreme Court nomination.

Veterans' Family, Caregiver & Advisory Committee (Public Meeting):

This group is charged with reviewing what the Department of Veterans Affairs does to support families, caregivers and survivors. They are working to craft recommendations and write a report on how to improve those services. The members are concerned that the models being considered include not only those proven successful in the veteran space but also other population groups. There seems to be a great deal of lack of consistency across VA facilities in how to access services and benefits. A recommendation was revised to reflect a call for greater consistency in how the Department provides these models of service. The idea is that the VA can learn from non-government nonprofit entities, and those entities can also learn from the VA. The goal is to ensure that caregivers are officially recognized as a part of the larger care team. This includes striking a balance between medical privacy and security and enabling care givers to get answers about their veteran's health care.

Appointments Confirmed and Nominated:

The Senate confirmed retired Air Force Major General James N. Stewart to become Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs. The Senate will hold a nomination hearing for Thomas McCaffery to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs.

Agent Orange coverage:

On October 22, The VA finalized a 2015 rule to expand Agent Orange service presumption to include members of the Air Force and Air Force Reserves who had regular contact with the C-123 aircraft used to spread the herbicide in Vietnam. The rule is applicable for any claim for service connection due to Agent Orange that was pending on or after June 19, 2015, the date the interim rule was published.

Update on Flag Amendment Bill:

The American Legion is continuing its efforts to protect the American Flag. Rep. Steve Womack (AR) re-introduced a flag protection constitutional amendment (**H. J. Res**) 61. There are 31 co-sponsors. On Flag Day, Sen Steve Daines (MT) introduced Senate companion measure (**S.J.**) 46. There are 13 co-sponsors.

Legion Moves To Open Up Its Membership Eligibility:

During its annual fall meeting, the American Legion's National Executive Committee passed a resolution calling for the U.S. Congress to declare that America has been continuously engaged in a state of war from December 7, 1941 to the present. The resolution also asks Congress to direct the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to qualify any military personnel, who served honorably for at least one day during that timeframe, to be a wartime veteran.

If Congress approves this, then the Legion's second resolution, also adopted during its fall NEC meeting, would be put into motion. The second resolution opens membership into The American Legion to veterans who served honorably during the following periods: April 6, 1917 to Nov. 11, 1918 and Dec. 7, 1941 to the date of cessation of armed hostilities as determined by the U.S. government. The broadened military service timeframe would also be applied to the ALA's membership eligibility.

For God and Country,

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