



May 23, 2025

WEEKLY GRASSROOTS NEWSLETTER

This week, we are asking Legionnaires to contact Congress to request support for the *GI Bill Parity Act*! Currently, National Guard and Reserve servicemembers only earn credit toward their Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits when they mobilize and deploy for federal missions. National Guard and Reserve servicemembers activated under state orders do not accrue eligibility for Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits. This legislation aims to count every day spent on weekend drills, annual training, attending military school, participating in an exercise, or responding to a disaster toward GI Bill eligibility. *The American Legion supports this legislation, and we appreciate all the emails you have sent so far. Go to the [Action Center](#) to quickly email a letter of support to your members of Congress.*

Have you had a recent meeting or phone call with your member of Congress? Report your contact today! Click [here](#) to register your Congressional contact and demonstrate the power of The American Legion advocacy in action.

BILLS PASSED IN THE HOUSE

On May 19, 2025, the following bills passed in the House:

- H.R. 217: CHIP IN for Veterans Act of 2025
- H.R. 1147: Veterans Accessibility Advisory Committee Act of 2025
- H.R. 1286: Simplifying Forms for Veterans Claims Act
- H.R. 1364: Automotive Support Services to Improve Safe Transportation Act of 2025
- H.R. 1587: Veterans Claims Education Act of 2025
- H.R. 1815: VA Home Loan Program Reform Act
- H.R. 1823: VA Budget Shortfall Accountability Act
- H.R. 2201: Improving VA Training for Military Sexual Trauma Claims Act

VETERANS MORTGAGE ASSISTANCE PLAN APPROVED BY HOUSE AFTER VA ENDS RESCUE PROGRAM

This article's original publication can be found [here](#).



Veterans struggling to pay their mortgages could get help under a plan approved by the House to replace a mortgage rescue program the Trump administration ended this month.

The House approved by voice vote on Monday night a bill that would create a partial claims program for the Department of Veterans Affairs. The program would essentially allow veterans with VA home loans who need to skip mortgage payments to move those missing payments to the end of their loan term.

The bill, if ultimately approved by the Senate and signed into law, could provide a lifeline to veterans who are at risk of foreclosure following the end of the Veterans Affairs Servicing Purchase program this month.

"It was a bad program, and the Trump administration was right to stop it. However, I recognize that sometimes veterans fall on hard times and veterans need a safety net," House Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Mike Bost, R-Ill., said on the House floor.

The bill approved Monday "is a fiscally responsible solution to enhance the VA home loan program and give veterans the assistance they might need if they are in home loan debt," Bost added.

The VA had a partial claims program during the COVID-19 pandemic when many veterans, like others around the world, struggled to pay bills because their normal stream of income was disrupted. But that partial claims program ended in October 2022.

When the program ended, thousands of veterans found themselves receiving unaffordable bills for mortgage payments they had missed.

After NPR reported on the issue last year, the Biden administration created the Veterans Affairs Servicing Purchase, or VASP, program as an emergency fix.

Under VASP, the VA purchased delinquent loans from holders and became the primary loan servicer, providing borrowers a stable payment plan at a fixed rate of 2.5% for the remainder of their loan.

The program helped about 17,000 veterans stay in their homes, while the VA purchased about \$5.5 billion worth of loans through the program, according to the department. But Republicans opposed VASP, arguing that the Biden administration acted without congressional approval and that taxpayer dollars were put at unacceptable risk by the VA becoming the loan holder.

Last month, the VA announced that it was ending VASP, effective May 1. While veterans already on VASP weren't kicked off, the department stopped accepting new applications on that date.

VASP "should have never started to begin with," VA Secretary Doug Collins said at a House Veterans Affairs Committee hearing last week, claiming that the Veterans Benefits Administration was on the verge of needing to shuffle around billions of dollars from other programs to cover VASP costs.

"It should not have been a program that was taking money away from other things to start and getting VA into the mortgage business," he said.

Democrats fumed at Collins' decision, arguing that ending VASP without an alternative in place put 80,000 veterans at risk of foreclosure.

The bill approved by the House on Monday would provide the alternative by giving the VA the authority to create a new partial claims program.

The partial claims program could save the government about \$170 million over a decade by reducing the amount of costs the VA pays related to loan defaults, according to the Congressional Budget Office.

The bill, which was first introduced by Rep. Derrick Van Orden, R-Wis., received bipartisan support after negotiations added some more protections Democrats were seeking for veterans who missed mortgage payments from March 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic started, to May 1, when VASP ended.

Still, Democrats are continuing to blast the VA for not taking more steps to ensure veterans aren't foreclosed on while the bill works its way through Congress.

"I continue to urge the secretary to reinstate some kind of assistance for veteran borrowers until this legislation is signed into law and implemented," Rep. Mark Takano, D-Calif., the ranking member of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, said on the House floor Monday. "That will take some time. Every veteran who loses their home will have no one to blame but President Trump and Secretary Collins."

VETERANS SEEKING PRIVATE MEDICAL CARE WILL NO LONGER NEED A SECOND REFERRAL FROM A VA DOCTOR

The article's original publication can be found [here](#).

The Department of Veterans Affairs announced it has streamlined the process for referring patients to clinicians in private practice to care for veterans when a timely appointment at the VA is not available.

Effective immediately, the VA removes a requirement for a veteran to have two referrals from VA doctors before making an appointment for non-VA care.

Although adoption of the [Mission Act in 2019](#) enabled veterans for the first time to receive health coverage for non-VA treatment of their service-connected medical conditions, they were still required to seek a second endorsement from a VA doctor after getting an initial referral, the VA said.

Now, veterans will only need to have a review and approval from their referring VA physician that the non-VA treatment is in their best interest, the VA said.

“Now, we’re making it even easier for veterans to get their health care when and where it’s most convenient for them,” Doug Collins, the VA secretary, said in a statement Monday. “We are putting veterans first at the department, and that means placing a premium on customer service and convenience.”

The referrals are to physicians in private practice who are pre-registered in the VA health network to receive reimbursement to care for veterans injuries and illnesses related to military duty.

VA's move to ease administrative delays for veterans health care comes as the agency prepares for [large staffing cuts this summer](#), according to an internal VA memo leaked to the media.

The agency also recently eliminated hundreds of contracts with community-based agencies and imposed a hiring freeze on non-essential positions within the agency.

The downsizing follows President Donald Trump's executive order to decrease costs and personnel across federal government.

VA meanwhile has struggled with persistent shortages of medical personnel, a problem that extends to the entire health care industry, according to the National Institute of Health Care Management. Shortages are attributed to an aging workforce coupled with rising demand for care.

LEGIONNAIRE OF THE WEEK

To recognize the weekly accomplishments of our Legionnaires, we will spotlight an individual every week. These individuals demonstrate exceptional grassroots activism by meeting with/contacting their Congressional Representative/Senator to advocate for veterans. Efforts like these truly make a difference and give veterans a voice in Congress.

Gerald Valle, Arizona

Gerald, for your steadfast advocacy of Legion priorities, we are honored to name you Legionnaire of the Week!

This week, Gerald met with Representative Greg Stanton's office to discuss The American Legion's legislative agenda. He discussed future possibilities to have the Congressman attend future local events focusing on veterans' issues and needs.

Thank you, Gerald, for your report and the time you have dedicated to the Legion's legislative priorities.

GRASSROOTS INFORMATION

Interested in what the Legion is advocating for in Congress on ***The Veteran's Role in Supporting the Military?*** Check out our [information papers](#) in the [Legislative Toolkit](#). This is a great starting point for a conversation with your elected officials!

As part of our ongoing Grassroots efforts, LegDiv staff is available to provide **Grassroots Training** tailored to the hosting Department's needs. If you are interested in hosting a Grassroots training event, please contact grassroots@legion.org or ejohnson@legion.org.

You can find relevant legislation and the Legion's stance on them in the [key legislation section of VoterVoice](#).

Register for Action Alerts today at
<https://www.votervoice.net/AmericanLegion/Register>



UPCOMING CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS

As of 5/22, there are **no** hearings scheduled next week. Congress will be back in session on June 2.

SVAC hearings can be viewed at: [Hearings - U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs](#)

HASC hearings can be viewed at: [Hearings – House Armed Services Committee](#)

SASC hearings can be viewed at: [Hearings – U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services](#)

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