



National Legislative Report

1 August 2019

Dear Sir Commandant,

The Legislative Committee has made significant strides in the past year since the 2018 Convention. We have established effective communication to our members via the Legislative page of the National Website. Our quarterly reports, letters supporting key legislative issues, and communications from the Commandant of the Marine Corps are contained therein. Additionally our progress reports that are regularly submitted to the Semper Fi magazine are included. The legislative committee members are being provided with important legislative via the email list in order to pass the word in their AOR. Still there is much to do to increase our effectiveness – such as better engagement with the committee, more engagement of Members of Congress at the local level by their Marine Corps League constituents, and written/electronic communication with Congress from the same population.

This Congress has so much left to get done – not only passing the 12 funding bills but working on legislation to lower the cost of prescription drugs for Americans, secure our border, fix our crumbling roads and bridges, rein in out of control spending, and much more. One key issue which will affect all military service members and their families is the pending legislation in the NDAA to cut 18,000 health care providers in all of the Armed Services – fortunately the House version of the NDAA has language in Section 716 that stays the cuts and provides for a review of the requirements. Members of Congress have a six-week legislative recess starting in August – leaving Congress just 13 legislative days to fund the government when it returns to Washington. So it is all the more imperative that we be active with our legislators at home. The possible result of this timeline is that, absent an extension of last year's two year spending agreement, crippling sequestration will likely return, complicating passage of NDAA 2020 (and necessitating the use of damaging continuing resolutions, once again. This is a national security issue.

This year we established fresh liaison with the Commandant of the Marine Corps Office of Legislative Affairs. As General Berger take the helm as our 38th Commandant we are seeing a new sight picture on the direction of our Corps (see 38th CMC Intent and 38th CMC Planning Guidance on the Legislative section of the MCL National Website - <https://www.mcleaguelibrary.org/legislation/> . Implementing this vision will be challenging, and even more so if Congress doesn't pass a timely NDAA. We will continue to work with OLA to ensure that we are able to support our active and reserve forces so that they are ready and able to take the fight to the enemy.

We have been more active with The Military Coalition – see the copies of the letters supporting important legislative issues over the past year on our legislative website. The TMC is an organization that list some 32 veteran support organizations (VSO) with a claimed aggregate membership of 5.5 million members. Our work with this organization is a force multiplier in advocating on key issues being worked in Congress.

Some of our key legislative accomplishments since the last MCL convention include:

Active/Reserve Force Issues: Two year spending agreement assuring passage of the NDAA 2019 ontime; 2.6% uniformed services pay raise; Increased force structure levels; actively engaged Commissary reform efforts; blocked the cut to BAH for 2019 among others.

Health Care Issues: Blocked additional TRICARE fee increases in NDAA 2019. Note: The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has issues a report advocating across the board TRICARE fee increases, so this issue still remains a concern.

Military Family/Veterans: Implementation of the VA MISSION Act in June 2019, expanding Veterans' access to care by consolidating seven existing community care programs into one, eliminating the Choice Act, and integrating providers into a broader network; \$5 billion to keep the VA Choice program funded for a year, to avoid user gaps in coverage; Establishment of a review process to review and develop a plan to optimize and modernize VA medical care facilities; expansion of VA caregiver program to all veterans of all eras who were seriously disabled, vice just post 9-11 conflicts; and much more.

As your Legislative Committee Chairman, I am honored to have served our MCL this past year and look forward to the next year with hope and enthusiasm. We must all be prepared to lean forward in the trenches!

Semper Fidelis,

Philip G. Short
Legislative Chairman,
Marine Corps League