



## **2026 AMVETS Legislative Priorities**

As part of AMVETS' Legislative Advocacy Week (LAW), AMVETS is sharing its top legislative priorities for the year. These issues are of importance to our members at both the national and local levels, and we respectfully urge your support:

1. Strengthen Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Across the VA and Armed Forces
  - a. Reauthorize the Staff Sergeant Parker Gordon Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program
  - b. Oversee the implementation of a Continuum of Wellness at the VHA
2. Expand and Modernize Neurorehabilitative Care for Veterans with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)
  - a. The BEACON Act of 2026 (H.R. 6993)
3. Increase Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) for Surviving Families
  - a. The Sharri Briley and Eric Edmundson Veterans Benefits Expansion Act (H.R. 6047)
  - b. The Caring for Survivors Act (H.R. 2055 & S. 611)
4. Achieve Successful, Interoperable Implementation of the VA Electronic Health Record
5. Pass the Major Richard Star Act (H.R. 2102 & S. 1032)
6. Pursue a Coordinated National Veterans Strategy Focused on Outcomes
  - a. (S. )
7. Enhance VA Workforce Stability to Improve Veterans' Access to Care
8. Advance Policy Solutions for Women Veterans
9. Enhance Readiness and Recruitment for the Next Generation of Veterans
10. Honor POWs/MIAs

More information on each is available below. Please reach out to Danielle Forand ([danielle@thenimitzgroup.com](mailto:danielle@thenimitzgroup.com)) for additional information or questions.

## **1. Strengthen Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Across the VA and Armed Forces**

For more than seven years, AMVETS has led efforts to elevate mental health as the most urgent issue facing the veteran and military community, recognizing it as a leading cause of preventable loss of life. Through sustained advocacy for innovative and community-based solutions, AMVETS helped advance the Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act, which expanded grant programs and authorized pilot initiatives to test new approaches to reducing veteran suicide.

That law established the Staff Sergeant Parker Gordon Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program (SSPG Fox SPGP), which AMVETS has closely followed to ensure it reaches veterans in crisis, including those seeking alternatives to traditional VA care. Bipartisan congressional engagement has highlighted promising outcomes from grantees such as the Boulder Crest Foundation and others who deliver evidence-informed, non-traditional models that improve post-traumatic growth, crisis response, and overall quality of life, demonstrating the value of sustained support for these approaches.

AMVETS appreciates the numerous bipartisan conversations and legislative proposals considered last year to **reauthorize the SSPG Fox SPGP**. As Congress moves toward reauthorization, AMVETS strongly encourages lawmakers to consult more closely with veteran service organizations and current grantees to ensure the program's structure, funding levels, and evaluation metrics reflect on-the-ground experience and maximize impact. Thoughtful reauthorization will help ensure successful models can be scaled responsibly and reach veterans nationwide.

AMVETS remains committed to pursuing legislative and oversight solutions that prioritize prevention, innovation, and accountability, with the goal of not only reducing veteran suicide but sustaining long-term progress.

Ideal legislative outcomes include:

- Reauthorizing the SSPG Fox SPGP and lifting funding caps to allow proven models to expand nationwide.
- **Implementing a Continuum of Wellness**, prioritizing early, non-pharmaceutical interventions that focus on wellness, resilience, and personal empowerment rather than simply treating symptoms.
- Increasing congressional oversight of VA suicide prevention efforts, including better understanding veterans' prior interactions with VA services and evaluating whether resources are being deployed effectively.
- Supporting legislation requiring the Department of Defense (DOD) to adopt a proactive role in preparing servicemembers for long-term mental wellness and positive life outcomes beyond service.

## **2. Expand and Modernize Neurorehabilitative Care for Veterans with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)**

AMVETS supports expanding and modernizing care for veterans living with traumatic brain injury (TBI), recognizing that traditional treatment models have too often fallen short in addressing long-term recovery and associated mental health conditions.

Since 2000, more than 400,000 veterans have sustained a TBI, many of whom continue to experience cognitive, behavioral, and psychological challenges that affect their quality of life and increase suicide risk. Improving outcomes for these veterans requires a more flexible, evidence-driven approach that embraces innovation and patient-centered care.

AMVETS strongly supports **the BEACON Act of 2026 (H.R. 6993)**, which would establish two grant programs within the VA to advance innovative, non-pharmacological, and non-traditional TBI treatments not currently available through the department. The legislation promotes partnerships with academic institutions, nonprofit organizations, and non-VA health care providers to develop, test, and implement new therapies, while also investing in independent, high-impact research focused on mental health recovery, suicide prevention, and long-term rehabilitation.

By authorizing dedicated funding for both treatment innovation and independent research, the BEACON Act modernizes the VA's approach to TBI care and strengthens its ability to incorporate effective therapies into clinical practice. AMVETS believes this legislation represents a critical step toward improving outcomes for veterans with TBI, supporting families and caregivers, and ensuring the VA remains responsive to emerging science and best practices in neurorehabilitative and mental health care.

## **3. Increase Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) for Surviving Families**

For decades, surviving spouses and families have advocated for a modest but meaningful increase in Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) for those left behind after a servicemember dies in service to the Nation. Despite the extraordinary sacrifices these families have made, current DIC rates lag behind comparable federal survivor benefits and fail to reflect today's economic realities. As a result, many survivors continue to face long-term financial insecurity through no fault of their own.

AMVETS strongly supports legislative efforts to modernize and strengthen DIC, including **the Sharri Briley and Eric Edmundson Veterans Benefits Expansion Act (H.R. 6047)** and **the Caring for Survivors Act (H.R. 2055 & S. 611)**, which would provide long-overdue relief to surviving spouses and families. These proposals seek to improve benefit levels and address structural inequities that have persisted for years,

bringing DIC closer in line with other federal survivor programs and recognizing the true cost of service-connected loss.

Ensuring that survivors are adequately supported is both a moral obligation and a tangible expression of the Nation's gratitude. Supporting these reforms is a necessary step toward honoring the sacrifice not only of fallen servicemembers, but also of the families who continue to bear that loss every day.

#### **4. Achieve Successful, Interoperable Implementation of the VA Electronic Health Record**

AMVETS supports the VA's efforts to implement a modern, interoperable electronic health record (EHR) that enables seamless transitions from the DOD to the VA. For decades, veterans have faced fragmented records, lost information, and delayed care as a result of incompatible systems. With legacy platforms no longer viable, completing this modernization effort is essential to ensuring continuity of care for current and future servicemembers and veterans.

AMVETS believes the success of this effort depends on sustained leadership, transparency, and accountability. While challenges remain, the focus must be on effective execution rather than politicization or calls to abandon the project. AMVETS supports robust congressional oversight to ensure the VA maintains clear lines of authority, stable project leadership, timely decision-making, and measurable progress.

We look forward to the continued rollout and next phase of deployment this year and believe that, with proper oversight and follow-through, a fully implemented EHR will improve patient safety, care coordination, and long-term health outcomes for veterans.

#### **5. Pass the Major Richard Star Act**

AMVETS strongly supports the immediate passage of **the Major Richard Star Act (H.R. 2102 & S. 1032)**. For nearly two decades, AMVETS has stood with the Bilirakis family and other advocates to end an outdated and unjust policy that prevents certain combat-injured veterans from receiving both their earned DOD retirement pay and their VA disability compensation. These benefits serve distinct purposes and should not offset one another.

Our members hold that it is fundamentally wrong to reduce a veteran's retirement pay dollar-for-dollar because of a service-connected disability. Veterans who have sacrificed their health in defense of the Nation should not be penalized for the injuries they sustained in service. The Major Richard Star Act is a long-overdue step toward fairness and honoring the full measure of their service.

#### **6. Pursue a Coordinated National Veterans Strategy Focused on Outcomes**

AMVETS recognizes the complexity of reorienting a VA system relied upon by millions of veterans, but believes current policies remain fragmented and misaligned with long-term outcomes. Despite more than \$300 billion spent annually across federal, state, nonprofit, and philanthropic veteran-serving programs, our country lacks a coordinated framework to align resources, measure success, and prevent avoidable gaps in care and support.

For several years, AMVETS has consistently prioritized the development of a National Veterans Strategy as a necessary step toward aligning care, benefits, and services around veteran outcomes. We are strongly encouraged by the meaningful, bipartisan progress reflected in **the National Veterans Strategy Act (S. \_\_\_\_\_)**, which would require the President to develop a comprehensive national veterans strategy every four years.

This strategy would align federal, state, local, private, and nonprofit efforts around clear national objectives, identify measurable indicators of veteran success, and ensure resources are directed toward programs that deliver results. By reducing duplication and improving accountability, the strategy would maximize the impact of taxpayer and donor dollars.

AMVETS believes a coordinated national strategy is essential not only to improving health, economic stability, and quality of life for veterans, but also to strengthening national security. Veterans play a critical role in inspiring future generations to serve, contributing to workforce readiness, and supporting civic and community leadership. By focusing on long-term outcomes and success, the National Veterans Strategy Act would help ensure veterans are equipped to lead purposeful, healthy lives after service.

## **7. Enhance VA Workforce Stability to Improve Veterans' Access to Care**

The VA's ability to meet veterans' health care needs ultimately depends on the strength, stability, and capacity of its workforce. Persistent staffing shortages, recruitment challenges, and retention issues continue to strain the system and undermine continuity of care. These workforce gaps affect not only specialty and primary care, but also mental health services, where shortages and burnout can limit timely, effective treatment and discourage veterans from seeking care.

AMVETS believes that delivering high-quality care to veterans requires a well-managed, fully staffed, and supported VA workforce. Strengthening recruitment, retention, and workforce planning across the VA is essential to ensuring consistent care, reducing reliance on temporary staffing solutions, and maintaining institutional expertise. While community care can serve as an important support tool, especially in areas facing acute workforce shortages, it should complement, not replace, a robust VA health care workforce.

AMVETS has long advocated for policies that strengthen VA health care delivery and will continue to support legislation that improves workforce stability, accountability, and long-term capacity within the VA. We will also continue supporting targeted public-private partnerships that help address short-term workforce gaps while preserving the VA's core mission of providing veteran-centered care through a strong and sustainable federal health care system.

## **8. Advance Policy Solutions for Women Veterans**

While mental health for all veterans remains a top priority, AMVETS recognizes the unique challenges facing women veterans, both in mental health outcomes and access to comprehensive health care. According to the VA's most recent National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report, the age-adjusted suicide rate for women veterans was approximately 14.2 per 100,000 in 2022, nearly double the rate for non-veteran women. This elevated risk is compounded by higher rates of military sexual trauma (MST), service-related stress, and barriers to timely, gender-specific care.

AMVETS is also concerned about persistent challenges within the Veterans Health Administration in meeting the broader health care needs of women veterans. These challenges include gaps in access to gender-specific primary care, reproductive and maternity care, specialty services, and continuity of care across VA facilities. Addressing these systemic issues is essential to improving health outcomes, strengthening trust in the VA health system, and ensuring women veterans receive equitable, high-quality care throughout their lives.

AMVETS has played a pivotal role in supporting legislation led by Senator Gillibrand and others to prevent military sexual trauma and expand access to health care and benefits for survivors. AMVETS will continue to engage with Congress, VA leadership, and fellow VSOs to advance policies that address both the mental and physical health needs of women servicemembers and veterans, with a focus on prevention, accountability, and access.

## **9. Enhance Readiness and Recruitment for the Next Generation of Veterans**

AMVETS believes that military readiness is foundational to national security and depends on a force that is physically, mentally, and emotionally prepared to meet the demands of service. Effective recruitment is essential to sustaining that force, particularly as the military faces ongoing challenges related to health, resilience, and eligibility for service. Readiness is not solely a matter of standards or appearance, but of ensuring servicemembers have the support and care necessary to maintain long-term performance and well-being.

We support recruitment and readiness efforts that take a comprehensive, evidence-driven approach to health and fitness. This includes targeted recruitment strategies that promote healthy lifestyles, as well as sustained investment in programs that address physical fitness, injury recovery, mental wellness, and chronic health conditions during and after service.

At the 2025 AMVETS National Convention, our members passed a resolution affirming that health and resilience are integral to military readiness and long-term force sustainability. Through engagement with the Military Coalition (TMC), support for recruitment-focused legislation, and partnerships aimed at improving servicemember health, AMVETS believes that strengthening the continuum of care across the DOD and the VA is critical to building and sustaining the next generation of veterans.

### **10. Honor POWs/MIAs**

AMVETS recognizes the enactment of the National POW/MIA Flag Act, signed into law in November 2019, which requires the year-round display of the POW/MIA flag at prominent federal buildings and national war memorials. This bipartisan law strengthened the Nation's commitment to honoring prisoners of war and those missing in action by expanding visibility beyond a limited set of commemorative days.

We believe in the importance of full and consistent compliance with the law and encourage congressional offices to ensure the POW/MIA flag is displayed in accordance with statutory requirements and established protocol. The legislation directs the Architect of the Capitol to display the National League of Families POW/MIA flag at the entrance of each Member's office in House and Senate office buildings on Capitol Grounds unless otherwise directed by the Member. AMVETS supports continued oversight to ensure these requirements are met and that the Nation's commitment to POWs and MIAs is visibly and uniformly upheld.

### **Legislation Publicly Supported in the 119th Congress**

<b>S. 793</b>	Bill reauthorizing the SSPG Fox SPGP
<b>H.R. 5371</b>	Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2026
<b>H.R. 5665/ S.2943</b>	The Access to Contraception Expansion (ACE) for Veterans Act
<b>H.R. 4895</b>	The Afghan Adjustment Act
<b>H.R. 1364/S. 1726</b>	The ASSIST Act
<b>H.R. 3309</b>	The Autonomy for All Disabled Veterans Act
<b>H.R. 6993</b>	The BEACON Act of 2026

<b>H.R. 6698</b>	The Board of Veterans Appeals Annual Report Transparency Act of 2025
<b>H.R. 2055/S. 611</b>	The Caring for Survivors Act
<b>H.R. 1404/S. 605</b>	The CHAMPVA Children's Care Protection Act of 2025
<b>H.R. 217</b>	The CHIP IN for Veterans Act
<b>S. 506</b>	The Coordinating Care for Senior Veterans and Wounded Warriors Act
<b>H.R. 210</b>	The Dental Care for Veterans Act
<b>H.R. 1288/S. 599</b>	The DRIVE Act
<b>H.R. 2034</b>	The Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship Opportunity Act
<b>H.R. 4145/S. 907</b>	The Ensuring Justice for Camp Lejeune Victims Act
<b>H.R. 3753</b>	The Expanding Access for Online Veteran Students Act
<b>H.R. 5529</b>	The Fair Housing for Disabled Veterans Act
<b>H.R. 2195</b>	The Feed Hungry Veterans Act
<b>H.R. 5723</b>	The FRAUD in VA Disability Exam Act
<b>S. 2679</b>	The Fulfilling Promises to Afghan Allies Act
<b>H.R. 3219</b>	The GAMES Act
<b>H.R. 4768/ S. 2448</b>	The Health Care Fairness for Military Families Act
<b>S. 701</b>	The Helping Heroes Act
<b>H.R. 5997</b>	The Helping Homeless Veterans Act of 2025
<b>S. 1139</b>	The HOPE for Heroes Act of 2025
<b>S. 1415</b>	The Housing Unhoused Disabled Veterans Act
<b>S. 3033</b>	The Improving Access to Care for Rural Veterans Act
<b>H.R. 1685</b>	The Justice for ALS Veterans Act of 2025
<b>H.R. 1004/S. 410</b>	The Love Lives On Act
<b>H.R. 3710</b>	The Loved Ones Internment Act
<b>H.R. 2102/S. 1032</b>	The Major Richard Star Act
<b>H.R. 6796</b>	The Military CARE Act
<b>H.R. 5683</b>	The Military Consumer Protection Task Force Act of 2025
<b>H.R. 1969</b>	The No Wrong Door for Veterans Act
<b>H.R. 4469</b>	The PRESUME Act
<b>H.R. 1400</b>	The Presumption for Radiation or Toxin Exposure Coverage for Troops Act (PROTECT Act)
<b>H.R. 1637/S. 914</b>	The Protecting Veteran Jobs Act
<b>H.R. 472/S. 124</b>	The Restore VA Accountability Act
<b>H.R. 3951</b>	The Rural Veterans' Improved Access to Benefits Act

<b>H.R. 4663</b>	The Saving Vet Halls Act
<b>H.R. 2605/S. 1441</b>	The Service Dogs Assisting Veterans (SAVES) Act
<b>H.R. 6047</b>	The Sharri Briley and Eric Edmundson Veterans Benefits Expansion Act
<b>H.R. 5339</b>	The Susan E. Lukas 9/11 Servicemember Fairness Act
<b>H.R. 4398/S. 2309</b>	The Veteran Burial Timeliness and Death Certificate Accountability Act
<b>H.R. 6358</b>	The Veteran Education Empowerment Act
<b>H.R. 1041/S. 478</b>	The Veterans 2nd Amendment Protection Act
<b>H.R. 1578</b>	The Veterans Claims Education Act (VCEA) of 2025
<b>H.R. 5261</b>	The Veterans Emergency Care Reimbursement Act
<b>H.R. 5996</b>	The Veterans Healthcare Improvement Act
<b>H.R. 220</b>	The Veterans Infertility Treatment Act
<b>H.R. 1971/S. 3138</b>	The Veterans SPORT Act
<b>H.R. 740/S. 275</b>	The Veterans' ACCESS Act of 2025