



*April 2026*

*Retired Military Newsletter*



**COLA WATCH.** The February 2026 Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W), released March 11, was 319.422, 0.7% above the COLA baseline of 317.265. March 2026 figures are scheduled to be released April 10.

**Wounded Veterans Tax:** Medically retired servicemembers who serve less than 20 years in uniform lose a dollar of military retirement pay for every dollar of VA disability compensation they receive. Congress eliminated this offset in 2004 for those who retired after 20 years of service; the Major Richard Star Act would eliminate the offset for combat-injured veterans forced to retire early.

The House version of the bill (H.R. 2102) had 313 cosponsors as of Jan. 15; the Senate version (S. 1032) had 77 cosponsors. Despite this level of support through multiple congressional sessions, the legislation has yet to receive a floor vote in either chamber, and procedural rules have thwarted attempts to include the text of the bill as an amendment to other legislation, including the National Defense Authorization Act.

The Star Act Alliance looks to continue the momentum in Congress through wider public outreach and media engagement. Groups in the alliance include: MOAA, WWP, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Air Force Sergeants Association, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, Blue Star Families, Non Commissioned Officers Association, Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, National Defense Committee, Jewish War Veterans, U.S. Army Warrant Officers Association, Fleet Reserve Association, Reserve Organization of America, Paralyzed Veterans of America, and Silver Star Families Action Group. (Source: MOAA, Jan 21, 2026)

**Military Helicopters to Broadcast Location:** The Senate [closed a loophole](#) that allowed military aircraft to fly without broadcasting their locations just like an Army helicopter was doing last January before it [collided with an airliner](#) over Washington, D.C., killing 67 people.

Just hours after [passing a massive defense bill](#) that included the worrisome provisions about military flights, the Senate approved a bipartisan bill that will require all aircraft use ADS-B technology — or Automatic Dependent Surveillance–Broadcast technology — to broadcast their locations.

Republican Sen. Ted Cruz said that “tragedy could have been avoided” if the Army Black Hawk had been using its ADS-B system to broadcast its location before the crash, and this bill should save lives.

It is not clear exactly when [the ROTOR act](#) that Cruz and Democratic Sen. Maria Cantwell and the rest of the Commerce Committee supports will be taken up by the House and whether changes will be made. The Trump administration supports the bill and is committed to helping get it passed, said a White House official who spoke on condition of anonymity ahead of the formal public statement on the bill. Cruz said he is optimistic the bill could head to the president's desk as soon as next month.

The Black Hawk helicopter involved in the deadly collision with a plane trying to land at Reagan National Airport also had a system that could have broadcast its location to the tower, but it was flying with it turned off because the military was concerned about observers being able to pinpoint its location during a training mission.

The NTSB has been recommending for decades to require all aircraft have locator systems that can both send out a signal with their location but also receive location data from other planes and helicopters. Part of the holdup has been concerns about the potential cost burden on the average Cessna owner and privacy concerns because the system would allow their planes to be tracked.

Airline jets and newer general aviation planes are already equipped with what is known as ADS-B Out that can broadcast their locations, but the advanced ADS-B In systems that can receive data about the locations of other aircraft are not common. The bill also requires a review of safety at airports across the country to ensure they don't face the same hazards that contributed to the crash at Reagan Airport. And the military and FAA will have to share safety data more freely.

Last March, the Federal Aviation Administration [required all military helicopters](#) to turn on their locator systems at all times when flying through the crowded airspace around the nation's capital. The agency also took action to ensure that helicopters and planes would no longer share the same airspace by pausing takeoffs and landings anytime a helicopter is passing the airport and closing some routes. FAA Administrator Bryan Bedford [promised](#) to maintain those safety measures to ensure flying around Washington doesn't get riskier even if the military bill becomes law. (Source: Military.com, Dec 18, 2025).

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**Top Legislative Issue for Vets in the 119<sup>th</sup> Congress: Shutdown Fairness Act (S. 3168)** Allows the Pentagon and the Department of Homeland Security to continue paying service members during any future funding lapse.

**Who it supports:** Currently serving, including National Guard and Reserve members. The best solution remains a timely appropriations process. The bills does NOT include members of the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps or the NOAA Commissioned Corps; MOAA continues to advocate for their inclusion.

**Improve and Enhance the Work Opportunity Tax Credit Act ([H.R. 6231](#) | [S. 3265](#))**

**What it does:** Modernizes the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC), a nonrefundable tax credit employers can take for hiring target group members during the employee's first year on the job, by increasing the amount of the credit and adding military spouses as a target group. The program is intended to reduce the unemployment rate of "job seekers who have consistently faced barriers to employment" by incentivizing employers with a tax credit, according to the Labor Department.

**Who it supports:** Unemployed veterans and military spouses.

**Governing Unaccredited Representatives Defrauding (GUARD) VA Benefits Act ([H.R. 1732](#))**

**What it does:** Reinstates criminal penalties for unaccredited claim representatives who charge unauthorized fees while assisting veterans with filing a claim for VA disability compensation benefits.

**Who it supports:** Veterans and retirees. Veterans deserve trusted, ethical, and accountable support when filing disability claims – support that protects their privacy, respects their service, and preserves their earned compensation. The goal is not to limit veterans’ ability to seek help, but to guarantee that when they do, the assistance comes from accredited professionals bound by high ethical and professional standards ... and that our veterans will not be forced to surrender a portion of the benefits they earned in service to the nation.

**Military CARE Act ([H.R. 6796](#))**

**What it does:** Requires the Pentagon to establish a digital system designed to improve access to care at military treatment facilities (MTFs) by providing beneficiaries with a standardized platform to report barriers to MTF care and creating a data record that does not exist today to give Defense Health Agency leadership and Congress the insights needed to address systemic access challenges.

**Who it supports:** All TRICARE beneficiaries, but especially military families. Military families must have a more effective option for reporting access problems — an option that also increases transparency to beneficiary challenges and leads to greater accountability and oversight of the MHS.

**Veteran Caregiver Reeducation, Reemployment, and Retirement Act ([H.R. 2148](#) | [S. 879](#))**

**What it does:** Expands health care coverage and career transition support for caregivers, and would require a study designed to provide caregivers with a path toward financial security in retirement.

**How you can help:** [Click here](#) and send a letter to your lawmakers now or find the name of your Congressional member and contact them. (Source: MOAA, Jan 21, 2026).

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**New Claim Assist Portal.** VA is making it easier than ever to keep your [claim](#) on track. With the new Claim Assist Portal, you’ll have a faster, more convenient way to respond when additional information is needed. If you’ve filed a benefits claim, you may receive an email with a direct link to the portal, helping you respond quickly and confidently so your claim can keep moving forward. No paperwork, scanning or searching through VA.gov required.

**What to expect**

- Fast notifications – You’ll get an email and subsequent SMS text if more information is needed.
- Secure access – Log in using: The email that received the message. A temporary password provided in the message. A time-sensitive verification code sent to your email after you log in using the email address and temporary password.

- Simple responses – You may need to check a box, type a short answer to a question or digitally sign a form online.
- Trusted sender – Messages will come from “U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (do-not-reply@notifications.va.gov),” a known VA Notify email address that should not go to your spam folder.
- Faster processing – Responding through the portal helps move your claim forward faster.

**What you need to do**

- Watch for a message – If VA needs more info, you’ll get an email and SMS text.
- Open the portal – Click the link and follow the instructions to log in.
- Respond to the request – Follow the steps in the portal to respond.

**Helping you stay on track**

The Claim Assist Portal makes it easier for you to respond when VA needs more information, so your claim can move forward without delays. It’s fast, secure and built to save you time. This is another step VA is taking to simplify the claims process and better support you every step of the way. Using the portal is not a requirement. You can continue to use mail as an option, but the Claim Assist Portal offers a faster, more convenient alternative. (Source: VA News email 4Mar2026).



We serve all the men and women of the Armed Forces of the United States of America

**How to Contact Us**

The Retired Activities Office, Naval Weapons Station, Seal Beach, California is located at 800 Seal Beach Blvd in Bldg. 10, Seal Beach, CA 90740-5000. We are here to serve all Armed Forces retirees and are open M-Fri 0900 to 1300. You may contact us at (562)-626-7152 or by emailing us at [rao-nwssb@us.navy.mil](mailto:rao-nwssb@us.navy.mil)

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