

Legislative Priorities for the 119th Congress



Jewish War Veterans
of the United States of America

Supporting America's Veterans, Service Members, Their Families, Caregivers, and Survivors

Overview

JWV works to support veterans and service members and believes that obligation extends to their families, including caregivers and survivors. JWV is and continues to be at the forefront as a voice for not only those of the Jewish faith but also for all veterans. As we look to the 119th Congress, Second Session, JWV will continue to advocate for all those currently serving or who have served in the uniform of the United States. Our priorities are listed below.

Major Richard Star Act

JWV supports legislation for the immediate payment of concurrent receipt of full military retired pay and veterans' disability compensation for disabled retirees. Specifically, JWV is seeking the enactment of the Major Richard Star Act (H.R. 1282/S. 344) that authorizes the concurrent receipt of retired pay and VA disability compensation to include Combat-Related Special Compensation (CRSC) beneficiaries who are medically retired with less than 20 years of service (Chapter 61). This legislation has strong bipartisan support, with 313 cosponsors in the House and 74 cosponsors in the Senate. Reduced retirement pays for those injured in combat and forced to retire medically, which communicates an awful message to those in our all-volunteer force. ***Thank you if your boss is already a cosponsor; if not, please sign on as a cosponsor of the legislation. JWV urges Congress to schedule a floor vote on the Act or as an amendment to the NDAA.*** Don't hesitate to contact JWV for additional information supporting this priority legislation.

Addressing Toxic Exposures and Burn Pits (PACT Act)

JWV, like many VSOs, made the PACT Act a top priority. While the legislation was life-changing for many veterans, more must be done. JWV commends the VA for screening more than 5 million veterans for toxic exposure and completing claims for those eligible under the PACT Act. **Congress must continue to provide the resources, including hiring individuals to adjudicate claims and funding upgrades to Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) IT systems, and ensure Veterans Health Administration officials have clinical resources, equipment, and space to treat these veterans.** JWV remains committed to holding VA accountable for implementing the PACT Act.

Suicide Prevention and Mental Health -- Reducing Veteran Suicide

Mental health and suicide prevention remain a top priority for JWV as the suicide rate among veterans is nearly double when compared to civilians, with women vets more than double that of female civilians. Veterans and service members must have increased access to mental health services as well as access to alternative and community-based treatments. **JWV urges Congress to fully fund the VA's suicide prevention and mental health budget, including extending free emergency health care for those in crisis.** The transition from active military service to civilian life is complex, and individuals are often at higher risk during this period. Education and awareness are paramount and must be integral to any prevention plan. In addition, the suicide rate for active-duty service members is at an all-time high. **The Informed Written Consent Act (HR 4837 and S. 3314) will address veterans' suicide and mental health, and JWV fully supports its enactment.**

Fixing VA's Electronic Health Record System

JWV remains concerned that VA continues to experience issues with deploying its electronic health record system and commends VA for pausing deployments in 2024. The combination of cost overruns and inadequate training for clinicians and staff jeopardizes patients' safety. Patients' safety is paramount, and

JWV urges the VA to improve training for its staff and to hold its own and Oracle officials accountable for the system's failures. JWV insists VA learn from and take corrective actions to prevent system failures before any deployments in 2025 and beyond. **JWV urges Congress to ensure patient safety is maintained during any future implementations.**

Supporting Women and Underserved Veterans

According to the VA, women are the fastest-growing veterans using VA services. JWV is committed to addressing the specialized health care needs of women veterans, including increasing cancer screenings, improving mental health care and access, addressing infertility, and reducing intimate partner violence. JWV supports the provisions of the Deborah Sampson Act and remains committed to improving maternal health. The Act also places a Women's Mental Health Champion Coordinator at every VA Medical Center to ensure women feel welcome and receive equitable treatment and care.

Supporting Emergency Air Ambulance Services

JWV strongly supports the Protecting Air Ambulance Services for Americans Act (S. 2518 / H.R. 4792). Introduced by Senators Marsha Blackburn (R-TN) and Michael Bennet (D-CO) and Representatives Ron Estes (R-KS-4) and Suzan DelBene (D-WA-1), this bipartisan legislation will help ensure veterans across America can continue to access emergency air medical services.

Access to timely emergency air transport can never be a roll of the dice. However, these services are in jeopardy because the reimbursement structure is outdated. If Congress does not act, air bases will begin closing, and veterans and their family risk being stranded as access disappears.

For the past several years, we have worked with Congress, VA, and the air ambulance industry to develop a long-term solution that protects veterans and provides VA with greater budget flexibility. S.2518 / H.R. 4792 is a common-sense solution giving the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services the data and authority needed to update the air ambulance fee schedule and ensure Veterans can continue to access this vital service.

The VSO community has remained at the forefront of this issue for the past several years. While incremental steps have been successful, we call on Congress to enact this crucial legislation to maintain air emergency transportation services for veterans across the country. These emergency services are essential as transportation time often determines if patients survive. When seconds matter, Veterans need to know they have access to life-saving care.

We urge you to support and swiftly pass the *Protecting Air Ambulance Services for Americans Act*.

Veterans answered the call to serve. Now, Congress has both the opportunity and the responsibility to ensure no veteran is left behind when minutes can mean the difference between life and death.

National Museum of American Jewish Military History (NMAJMH)

Do you know about our museum, which is in our headquarters building? JWV's leadership recognized the need to bring the stories of Jewish servicemen and women to the public because if Jews do not tell our stories or share our message, who will? The National Museum of American Jewish Military History (located near Dupont Circle) was chartered in 1958. The museum is dedicated to recognizing, preserving, and commemorating the service, heroism, and sacrifices of Jewish men and women who have fought in wars and contributed to America's peace and freedom. **We urge you to tour the museum on your next visit to Washington, DC.** I am sure you will be surprised to learn about the long and extensive U.S. military history of Jewish military members and veterans.

Conclusion

JWV has a long history of advocating for a strong national defense and fair recognition and compensation for veterans, service members, and their families. We are proud to share and work with Members of Congress and colleagues at other VSOs. There is strength in numbers, and by working together, we can continue to ensure that all veterans and military personnel receive the benefits earned and deserve.

For more information on these priorities, contact National Executive Director Ken Greenberg [at kgreenberg@jwv.org](mailto:kgreenberg@jwv.org), www.jwv.org