

ALVA

VETERANS ADVOCACY & BENEFITS REPORT

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Policy. Benefits. Opportunities. What veterans need to know.

The American Latino Veterans Association (ALVA) monitors public policy, legislation, executive actions, benefits, services and opportunities affecting America's veterans, servicemembers and military families. This inaugural monthly report highlights consequential developments, and practical information veterans can use.

THE BOTTOM LINE

- Congress is considering a broad veterans agenda. ALVA is prioritizing the Take Care of America's Veterans Act, the Jorge Otero Barreto Medal of Honor Act and the Major Richard Star Act, while tracking additional legislation on survivor benefits, cost-of-living adjustments, mental health, brain injury and VA modernization.
- The White House's most consequential new veterans/military-family policy action this month is Executive Order 14417 establishing the President's Military Spouse Commission. Other White House items reviewed were largely ceremonial or appointments rather than new veterans policy.
- States are active on veterans policy: Louisiana enacted a broad package of protections and benefits; California placed an \$11.25 billion Veterans and Affordable Housing Bond before voters; Virginia is considering regulation of paid veterans-benefits assistance; Minnesota is implementing new benefits for Secret War veterans; and Pennsylvania is considering changes to its disabled-veteran property-tax exemption.
- VA launched a \$29 million emergency-assistance program for homeless veterans, is contacting roughly 3.8 million unenrolled veterans through Choose VA, and began a clinical trial of psilocybin for treatment-resistant depression in veterans.

WASHINGTON WATCH

PRIORITY / ACTION

Take Care of America's Veterans Act: H.R. 9237 / S. 4744 | Priority | Pending in Congress

This comprehensive package combines more than 60 bipartisan veterans measures addressing health care, disability and survivor benefits, caregivers, education, transition assistance, economic opportunity and VA accountability. It includes the Major Richard Star Act, Veterans' ACCESS Act, Love Lives On Act and Sharri Briley and Eric Edmundson Veterans Benefits Expansion Act. The package has broad support for many provisions but has also drawn objections over proposed offsets involving future disability-compensation rules.

Why it matters: The legislation could reshape multiple VA programs at once and affect veterans, caregivers, survivors and military families nationwide.

ALVA position: Monitoring.

What to know / watch: ALVA will track whether congressional leaders revise disputed provisions and whether the package moves when Congress returns from its August district/state work period.

[Senate Veterans Affairs Committee - Take Care of America's Veterans Act](#)

Sergeant First Class Jorge Otero Barreto Medal of Honor Act: H.R. 9595 | Priority / Action | Referred to House Armed Services Committee

H.R. 9595 would authorize the President to posthumously award the Medal of Honor to Sergeant First Class Jorge Otero Barreto for acts of valor during the Vietnam War. Otero Barreto was one of the most highly decorated Puerto Rican soldiers of the war.

Why it matters: The legislation seeks the nation's highest military recognition for an extraordinary Latino veteran whose service and valor are central to the story of Hispanic contributions to U.S. national defense.

ALVA position: Supports.

What to know / watch: ALVA will watch for additional cosponsors and House Armed Services Committee action and encourages supporters to contact their representatives in support of H.R. 9595.

[Official bill text - H.R. 9595](#)

Major Richard Star Act: H.R. 2102 / S. 1032 | Priority / Action

The Major Richard Star Act would allow certain combat-injured, medically retired veterans to receive both their full Department of Defense retirement pay and VA disability compensation without the current dollar-for-dollar offset. More than 50,000 combat-injured retirees could be affected.

Why it matters: The proposal addresses a longstanding disparity for servicemembers whose careers were cut short by combat-related injuries.

ALVA position: Monitoring; the policy is also included in H.R. 9237 / S. 4744.

What to know / watch: The stand-alone bill has broad bipartisan support, but its principal legislative path is currently tied to the larger veterans package.

[Senate Veterans Affairs Committee - Major Richard Star Act](#)

MOVING

Sharri Briley and Eric Edmundson Veterans Benefits Expansion Act: H.R. 6047 | Moving | Passed House

Would increase certain VA compensation for catastrophically disabled veterans and qualifying survivors. The House passed the measure in May; its provisions are also included in the larger Take Care package.

[House Veterans Affairs Committee - H.R. 6047](#)

Love Lives On Act: H.R. 1004 / S. 410 | Moving | Senate Committee advanced S. 410

Would allow surviving spouses of fallen servicemembers to retain certain survivor benefits if they remarry before age 55. The Senate Veterans Affairs Committee advanced S. 410 in March, and the proposal is also included in the Take Care package.

[Senate Veterans Affairs Committee - March 18 legislative meeting](#)

Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2026: H.R. 8552 / S. 4487 | Moving

Would align annual increases in VA disability compensation, clothing allowances and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation with the Social Security cost-of-living adjustment. The House companion advanced from subcommittee in June; the Senate bill was introduced with broad bipartisan sponsorship.

[Senate Veterans Affairs Committee - 2026 COLA legislation](#)

WATCH

RECOVER Act: H.R. 2283 | Watch

A mental-health-focused measure reported by the House Veterans Affairs Committee in May. It remains worth tracking as Congress considers veterans mental-health and suicide-prevention policy.

Blast Overpressure Research and Mitigation Task Force Act: H.R. 6444 | Watch

Would advance research and coordination related to blast overpressure and traumatic brain injury; reported by the House Veterans Affairs Committee in May.

Veterans Scam and Fraud Evasion (VSAFE) Act: H.R. 1663 | Watch

Would strengthen VA coordination and accountability against scams and fraud targeting veterans and their benefits. The measure has received support from major military and veterans organizations and remains relevant as states also move to regulate paid claims-assistance services.

[House Veterans Affairs Committee - May 2026 markup](#)

FROM THE WHITE HOUSE

President's Military Spouse Commission: Executive Order 14417 | August 3, 2026

The President established the President's Military Spouse Commission to advise and assist on policies affecting military spouses and families. Its duties include identifying concerns and developing recommendations involving housing, employment, health care, education and deployment-related support.

Why it matters: Military-family quality of life affects readiness, retention and the transition from military to civilian life.

What to know / watch: The Commission must report to the President at the end of each fiscal year and is scheduled to operate for two years unless extended. ALVA will watch for its recommendations and subsequent agency action.

[Executive Order 14417 - The White House](#)

ACROSS THE STATES

Louisiana: 2026 Veterans Legislative Package | Multiple enacted measures | Effective August 1, 2026

Louisiana enacted a broad group of veterans measures. Highlights include SB 51 / Act 203 creating state penalties for fraudulent claims of military service; HB 609 / Act 558 waiving certain medical-record fees for veterans preparing disability claims; SB 105 / Act 355 allowing a DD-214 to document eligibility for TOPS education benefits; and several employment and public-service measures. A separate constitutional amendment, SB 180 / Act 39, will ask voters whether qualifying surviving spouses may transfer an expanded property-tax exemption to one subsequent home.

Why it matters: The package addresses fraud, disability-claim costs, education, employment and surviving-spouse protections in a single legislative session.

[Louisiana Department of Veterans Affairs - 2026 legislative summary](#)

California: Veterans and Affordable Housing Bond Act of 2026: SB 417 | Signed | On November ballot

Governor Gavin Newsom signed SB 417 to place an \$11.25 billion Veterans and Affordable Housing Bond before California voters in November. The measure would support affordable housing, homeownership programs and housing initiatives that include assistance for veterans and people experiencing homelessness.

Why it matters: Housing affordability and homelessness remain major issues for veterans; this measure puts a large-scale funding decision directly before voters.

[Governor of California - Veterans and Affordable Housing Bond Act](#)

Virginia: Veterans' Services Protection Act: HB 1268 | 2026 Regular Session

HB 1268 would regulate compensation for preparing, presenting, prosecuting, advising on or consulting about veterans-benefit claims. The proposal is part of a broader national effort to protect veterans from unaccredited or predatory claims-assistance businesses.

Why it matters: Veterans seeking earned federal benefits can be vulnerable to high fees or misleading claims-assistance practices; state regulation can add consumer protections.

[Virginia Legislative Information System - HB 1268](#)

Minnesota: Benefits for Veterans of the Secret War in Laos | Implementation underway

Minnesota is implementing an eligibility-verification process for veterans of the Secret War in Laos who served in Special Guerrilla Units or other irregular forces. Starting July 1, 2026, applicants who do not qualify through the federal Hmong Veterans Naturalization Act pathway may use a VA pre-need burial eligibility determination as part of the state process.

Why it matters: The policy extends recognition and specified state benefits to veterans whose service supported U.S. national-security objectives but did not fit traditional U.S. military-service categories.

[Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs - Secret War veterans](#)

Pennsylvania: Disabled Veterans' Real Estate Tax Exemption: SB 809 | Watch

SB 809 would remove the wartime-service requirement from Pennsylvania's disabled-veterans real-estate tax exemption. The bill remains before the Senate Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee.

Why it matters: Removing the wartime requirement could expand access to property-tax relief for qualifying disabled veterans whose service occurred outside a formally defined wartime period.

[Pennsylvania General Assembly - SB 809](#)

VA BENEFITS & SERVICES

\$29 Million Emergency Assistance Fund for Homeless Veterans | Announced August 14, 2026 | New program

VA announced a \$29 million fund to provide assistance to eligible homeless veterans and veterans participating in the HUD-VASH program. The funding can address immediate needs including emergency supplies and transportation.

Why it matters: Flexible emergency assistance can help veterans address immediate barriers while they work toward or maintain stable housing.

What to know / watch: Veterans who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness should contact VA or a local VA homeless program to ask what assistance is available.

[U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs - homelessness assistance](#)

Choose VA Outreach: Check Your Health-Care Eligibility | August 13 - September 11, 2026

VA is mailing official 'Choose VA' postcards to approximately 3.8 million veterans who are not enrolled in VA health care. VA says the mailing is legitimate and is intended to help veterans understand eligibility and enrollment.

Why it matters: Veterans who previously assumed they were ineligible may have enrollment options today.

What to know / watch: If you receive a Choose VA postcard, review it rather than discarding it. Veterans can also check eligibility directly through VA.

[VA - Official Choose VA postcards](#)

VA Launches Psilocybin Trial for Treatment-Resistant Depression | August 5, 2026

VA launched a clinical trial to evaluate the safety and effectiveness of psilocybin for veterans with major depression that has not responded to standard treatment, including veterans with concurrent post-traumatic stress disorder.

Why it matters: The trial represents a significant VA research initiative involving an emerging treatment for serious mental-health conditions affecting veterans.

What to know / watch: This is a clinical trial, not a generally available VA treatment. ALVA will watch for study results and any future changes in VA treatment policy.

[VA Press Room - psilocybin clinical trial](#)

OPPORTUNITIES FOR VETERANS

Employment, Entrepreneurship and Education Resources | Current opportunities | August 2026

VA's Jobs of the Week roundup for August 17 includes employer listings and links to veteran-focused employment resources. VA's VetResources network also highlights entrepreneurship, contracting and scholarship opportunities.

Why it matters: These resources can connect veterans with employers and programs actively seeking veteran participation.

What to know / watch: Review opportunities promptly; VA notes that many job listings close within 7 to 30 days.

[VA Jobs of the Week - August 17](#)

TAKE ACTION

HELP A VETERAN CHECK VA HEALTH-CARE ELIGIBILITY

Know a veteran who isn't enrolled in VA health care? Encourage them to check their eligibility. With VA currently reaching out to millions of unenrolled veterans, this is a timely opportunity to make sure veterans know what they may qualify for.

ACTION: Share VA health-care enrollment information with at least one veteran or military family this month.

[Apply for or learn about VA health care](#)

SUPPORT RECOGNITION FOR SFC JORGE OTERO BARRETO

H.R. 9595 is pending before the House Armed Services Committee. Veterans and supporters who wish to advocate for the measure can contact their U.S. representative and ask them to support or cosponsor the Sergeant First Class Jorge Otero Barreto Medal of Honor Act.

ACTION: Contact your U.S. representative and ask them to support H.R. 9595.

[Read H.R. 9595 - official bill text](#)

LOOKING AHEAD

- Movement on priority veterans legislation, including H.R. 9237 / S. 4744, H.R. 9595 and H.R. 2102 / S. 1032, plus action on the survivor-benefit and COLA bills highlighted in Washington Watch.
- Congressional hearings, committee action and appropriations decisions affecting veterans and VA when lawmakers return from the August work period.
- Recommendations and implementation steps from the President's Military Spouse Commission.
- State action on veterans claims-assistance protections, housing, tax relief, survivor benefits and other state-level benefits.
- VA implementation of new homelessness assistance, health-care enrollment outreach and emerging mental-health research initiatives.

STAY INFORMED. STAY ENGAGED.

The ALVA Veterans Advocacy & Benefits Report is a regular publication of the American Latino Veterans Association highlighting consequential public policy, legislation, executive actions, benefits, services and opportunities affecting America's veterans and their families. alvavets.org | @alvavets

ALVA's mission is to help Latino veterans thrive and recognize their indispensable contributions.

Information current as of August 19, 2026. This report is provided for informational and advocacy purposes. Veterans should consult VA or the appropriate government agency regarding individual eligibility for benefits. ALVA's inclusion of legislation or policy does not constitute support or opposition unless expressly stated.