

VETERANS ADVOCACY & BENEFITS REPORT

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

Prepared for ALVA review October 15, 2026 | Coverage: September 16–October 15, 2026. Selected developments affecting veterans, servicemembers and military families, with practical implications and primary-source links.

THE BOTTOM LINE

- The Major Richard Star Act gained the 218 signatures needed for a House discharge petition; a vote has not yet occurred and the bill is not law.
- VA's new suicide-prevention report counted 6,488 veteran suicides in 2024; VA also awarded \$111.9 million to 191 community prevention organizations.
- Eligible Veterans' Group Life Insurance (VGLI) policyholders will owe no premiums from November 2026 through January 2027; no application is required.
- Social Security announced a 3.6% COLA for 2027. Comparable VA disability and survivor-benefit rate increases still await final implementation and published VA tables.
- VA opened six-site VA.gov account setup pilots, including San Juan, Puerto Rico; VET TEC 2.0 listed 4,000 FY2027 training openings as of October 1.

WASHINGTON WATCH

PRIORITY / ACTION

Major Richard Star Act — discharge petition reaches 218 signatures

H.R. 2102 / S. 1032 | Petition milestone: September 15 | Not enacted

House Discharge Petition No. 22 received its 218th signature on September 15. The bipartisan bill would remove the offset that prevents certain combat-injured veterans medically retired with fewer than 20 years of service from receiving both full military retired pay and VA disability compensation. The petition enables further House procedure; it does not enact the bill.

Why it matters: A potential House vote could advance a long-standing benefit priority. The petition must meet legislative-day waiting rules, and no floor vote was verified as scheduled at publication.

SOURCE [House Clerk — petition roster](#) · [House Veterans' Affairs Committee update](#)

SFC Jorge Otero Barreto Medal of Honor Act

H.R. 9595 | Referred to House Armed Services Committee | ALVA position: Supports

The bill would authorize a posthumous Medal of Honor for the decorated Puerto Rican Vietnam veteran. No subsequent committee action was identified in the reviewed official bill record; ALVA will continue tracking cosponsors and committee movement.

Why it matters: Recognition of Latino military service remains a distinct ALVA advocacy priority.

SOURCE [Official bill record — GovInfo](#)

FY2027 stopgap law extends several veterans programs through December 11

H.R. 6500 / Public Law 119-103 | Enacted September 2 | Current law

As FY2027 began October 1, the enacted continuing appropriations law kept federal operations funded temporarily and extended authorities for veteran homelessness assistance, community suicide-prevention grants and VA's Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans through December 11. This is a temporary extension—not full-year funding or a new permanent benefit.

Why it matters: Continuity of homelessness and mental-health services matters now; the Minority Veterans advisory extension is particularly relevant to ALVA's mission.

SOURCE [Enacted law — GovInfo](#)

MOVING / WATCH

2027 COLA: Social Security announces 3.6%; VA legislation remains pending

H.R. 8552 / S. 4487 | Veterans' COLA bills pending | SSA announcement: October 14

SSA announced a 3.6% cost-of-living adjustment for 2027 on October 14. The bipartisan Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2026 would apply the corresponding increase to VA disability compensation and survivors' Dependency and Indemnity Compensation effective December 1, 2026. As of publication, the bills have not been enacted and VA has not posted final 2027 compensation tables. The 3.6% SSA rate is confirmed; exact VA payments are not.

SOURCE [SSA — 2027 COLA](#) · [H.R. 8552 — GovInfo](#) · [S. 4487 — GovInfo](#)

FROM THE WHITE HOUSE

Executive Order 14426 — initial records-sharing milestone passes

Signed September 8 | Initial 30-day deadline: October 8 | Implementation watch

The September 8 order directs immediate transfer of departing servicemembers' personnel and service-treatment records to VA within 30 days and calls for interoperable records systems, digital benefits tools and stronger job-transition connections on longer timelines. The October 8 milestone has passed; publicly verified evidence of full implementation was not identified.

Why it matters: Faster, reliable records transfers could reduce delays in health care, benefits and employment support. The order sets implementation duties; it does not itself guarantee immediate access to new benefits.

SOURCE [White House — Executive Order 14426](#)

ACROSS THE STATES

California — new laws expand benefits access and military-family protections

Signed September 28 | Enacted state legislation

California signed SB 296 on disabled-veteran property-tax exemptions, AB 2219 to strengthen veteran-service coordination, AB 2054 on military-family leave eligibility and AB 2203 on priority higher-education registration for GI Bill/CalVet students. Each measure has its own eligibility and effective-date rules.

SOURCE [California Governor — signed bills and summaries](#)

Texas — \$31 million veterans assistance grant round opens

Applications opened October 2 | Deadline: December 2, 2026 at 5 p.m. Central

The Texas Veterans Commission is accepting applications from eligible nonprofits and local governments delivering direct veteran services, including housing, mental health, legal aid and job training. Grants are competitive; this is a funding opportunity, not an award announcement.

SOURCE [Texas Governor — funding announcement](#) · [Texas Veterans Commission — applicants](#)

VA BENEFITS & SERVICES

New national suicide-prevention data and community grants

Annual report: September 30 | Grants announced September 29

VA's 2026 annual report found 6,488 veteran suicides in 2024, averaging 17.7 per day; 62% of veterans who died by suicide were not receiving VA health care in the year they died or the prior year. Separately, VA awarded \$111.9 million to 191 organizations through the Staff Sergeant Parker Gordon Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program.

Why it matters: The findings underscore the importance of outreach beyond VA-enrolled veterans. Veterans in crisis can call 988 and press 1 or text 838255.

SOURCE [VA — annual suicide report](#) · [VA — grant awards](#)

VGLI three-month premium holiday

Announced September 16 | Applies November 2026–January 2027

VA says eligible Veterans' Group Life Insurance policyholders will owe no premiums for three months. More than 457,000 veterans are enrolled; VA estimates average savings of about \$330 per policyholder. Coverage must be current and not lapsed or cancelled for nonpayment. Eligible policyholders need not apply; prepaid premiums may be credited or refunded on request.

SOURCE [VA — VGLI premium-holiday announcement](#)

Faster VA.gov account setup piloted at six medical centers

Launched October 7 | Pilot, not nationwide

VA and CLEAR began free, optional assisted VA.gov account-creation pilots at medical centers in Atlanta, Brooklyn, Orlando, Palo Alto, San Juan, Puerto Rico, and Washington, D.C. Veterans need a current government photo ID, phone number and personal email. San Juan participation is a practical access development for Puerto Rico veterans; the pilot is not yet nationwide.

SOURCE [VA — six-site pilot details](#)

VA approves \$2.681 billion in facility improvements

Announced October 14 | FY2026 fourth-quarter project approvals

VA approved \$2.681 billion in fourth-quarter FY2026 infrastructure projects, including repairs to aging systems, building upgrades and infrastructure to support future electronic health records. These are project approvals—not completed construction or a new individual benefit.

SOURCE [VA — infrastructure announcement](#)

October 1 education-benefit rates now in effect

Effective October 1, 2026 | MGI-B-SR and Chapter 35

The Montgomery GI Bill Selected Reserve full-time monthly rate is now \$508. Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance (Chapter 35) rates also changed; the full-time institutional rate is \$1,621. Actual payments vary by enrollment, training type and eligibility.

SOURCE [VA — MGI-B-SR rates](#) · [VA — Chapter 35 rates](#)

OPPORTUNITIES FOR VETERANS

VET TEC 2.0 — new fiscal-year high-tech training openings

4,000 participant openings listed October 1 | Applications open

VET TEC 2.0 supports approved non-degree technology training for eligible veterans and servicemembers within 180 days of separation. VA listed 4,000 FY2027 participant openings on October 1 (not a real-time count). Eligibility includes at least 36 months of active-duty service and being under 62 when approved. Check approved providers and current availability before applying.

Why it matters: The annual cap makes early review worthwhile for veterans considering technology career pathways.

SOURCE [VA — VET TEC 2.0 eligibility and application](#)

TAKE ACTION

- Support recognition for SFC Jorge Otero Barreto: If you agree with ALVA's established position, ask your U.S. representative to support or cosponsor H.R. 9595. The bill remains in committee.
- Protect VA benefits from scams: VA warned October 14 about fraudulent AI-generated "veterans grants" used to steal direct-deposit information. Verify offers through official VA channels and report suspected VA-benefits fraud to VSAFE at 833-388-7233.

USEFUL LINKS [Find your U.S. representative](#) · [VA — scam warning](#) · [Veterans Crisis Line](#)

LOOKING AHEAD

- November: Watch for any scheduled House action on the Major Richard Star Act once discharge-petition procedural requirements are satisfied; no vote date is confirmed.
- November 2026–January 2027: Eligible VGLI policyholders receive the automatic three-month premium holiday. SSA's 2027 COLA notices become available online in late November.
- December 2: Texas veterans assistance grant deadline (5 p.m. Central). December 11: Current federal stopgap funding and specified veterans-program extensions expire unless Congress acts.
- Late 2026: Watch for enactment of VA compensation COLA legislation and final VA 2027 rate tables, plus further implementation updates on Executive Order 14426.

STAY INFORMED. STAY ENGAGED.

The American Latino Veterans Association helps Latino veterans thrive and recognizes their indispensable contributions. alvavets.org | @alvavets

Editorial note: Information verified through October 15, 2026. Prepared for ALVA editorial review, not yet published. Bills are proposals until enacted; individual eligibility and benefit amounts must be confirmed with the relevant agency.