



Legion Lines Out
Priorities for 118th
Congress

-Written by [The American Legion](#)

Funding, oversight and fulfillment of the landmark Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act and heightened attention/access to mental health care for veterans are among the legislative priorities The American Legion is presenting to Congress during the Washington Conference Feb. 26 – March 1.

The PACT Act, signed into law last August, accomplished one of The American Legion’s highest agenda items for 2022. The measure expands VA health-care services and disability benefits eligibility for more than 3.5 million veterans exposed to burn pits in the global war on terrorism, along with others with health-care conditions attributable to toxic contamination during military service. Properly funded implementation and oversight are the next steps, the Legion argues.

Also on the organization’s radar for the first session of the 118th Congress are protection from predatory exploitation of veterans seeking help applying for VA benefits or Camp Lejeune Justice Act lawsuit damages. A more level playing field for National Guard veterans using their GI Bill benefits, support for Afghan allies of the U.S. military and an updated U.S. Flag Code are also included in this year’s message to lawmakers.

American Legion National Commander Vincent J. “Jim” Troiola will deliver the Legion’s testimony before a joint session of the House and Senate Committees on Veterans’ Affairs on March 1.

PACT Act: Implementation & Oversight
Passage of the SFC Heath Robinson PACT Act in the 117th Congress ensured millions of toxic-

exposed veterans will now have access to healthcare and compensation they rightfully deserve. VA estimates there will be up to 7 million new disability claims filed, due to eligibility expansion under the PACT Act and that the claims backlog will increase to 450,000 by October 2023. The efforts put forth by the VA workforce to reduce claims backlogs in recent years have been admirable, but substantial backlogs of hundreds of thousands of claims for sustained periods of time are not acceptable. It is imperative that VA fully leverage the resources made available in the PACT Act to assist in the continued modernization of information technology systems, as well as the hiring of additional employees to ensure veterans claims are adjudicated in a timely manner. The American Legion urges Congress to provide necessary oversight and funding to ensure VA has the resources needed to properly implement this legislation.

Mental Health & Suicide Prevention
The leading issue facing the veteran community is suicide. The suicide rate among veterans is nearly double that of their civilian counterparts, with more than 6,000 veterans taking their lives annually. It is imperative to destigmatize asking for mental health support. Simultaneously, access to such support must increase. The American Legion encourages Congress to enhance access to alternative therapies, robustly fund VA’s suicide-prevention outreach budget and continue to invest in mental-health research.

Support our Afghan Allies
Support our Afghan Allies In the U.S. military, there is a code: “no one left behind.” For two decades, members of the U.S. Armed Forces fought shoulder-to-shoulder with brave Afghan allies who served with and protected Americans, fighting for the freedom of Afghanistan and its people. The United States must honor its promises and provide genuine, lasting protection for the Afghans who have made it safely to the United States, and for those who were left behind. The American Legion urges Congress to reintroduce and pass

legislation that would grant permanent legal status to Afghan refugees and improve the Special Immigrant Visa process for Afghans who served alongside U.S. servicemembers.

Military Quality of Life
The U.S. military’s greatest resources are individual servicemembers and their families. Without highly qualified and committed men and women, even the most sophisticated weaponry will not provide the deterrent necessary to defend our nation. Factors that contribute to quality of life include proper compensation, career development, appropriate housing, quality healthcare, reasonably priced commissaries and access to affordable daycare. The American Legion urges Congress to pass legislation that would increase access to child care for military families, increase appropriations to address matters involving servicemember food insecurity and increase funding to renovate military housing.

VA Healthcare Modernization
The future of VA healthcare is as a hybrid system consisting of Veterans Health Administration-provided inpatient and outpatient care, telehealth and community care. Ensuring VA is equipped to meet the unique needs of an increasingly diverse veteran population requires that VA fully leverage all healthcare modalities and ensure a seamless transition between them. Modernizing electronic health records, veteran-centric access standards, and a transparent online scheduling system for VHA-provided care and community care alike are all essential to ensuring veterans receive the care they deserve. The means by which VA delivers care may change, but one thing will not: VA should continue to provide the best care anywhere to our nation’s veterans.

Protect Veterans from Predatory Actors
America’s veterans are targeted by predatory actors that seek to profit from an array of benefits that have been rightfully earned by those who have served our nation from claims companies that charge...

- Read more on page 2 (Priorities continued)



Saturday, February 4th – Sponsored District 12 Meeting held @ 11am-1pm, 5419 S. Alston Avenue, Durham.
Tuesday, February 7th – Social hang @ Tobacco Wood Brewing Company (6-8pm), 2500 Meridian Parkway, Durham.
Tuesday, February 14th – Membership meeting (no dinner) @ 7pm, 5419 S. Alston Avenue, Durham.
Tuesday, February 21st – Social hang @ Tobacco Wood Brewing Company (6-8pm), 2500 Meridian Parkway, Durham.
Tuesday, February 28th - Membership meeting (no dinner) @ 7pm, 5419 S. Alston Avenue, Durham.
Tuesday, March 7th – Social hang @ Tobacco Wood Brewing Company (6-8pm), 2500 Meridian Parkway, Durham.
Tuesday, March 14th – Membership meeting and dinner (meal at 6pm, meeting at 7pm), 5419 S. Alston Avenue, Durham.

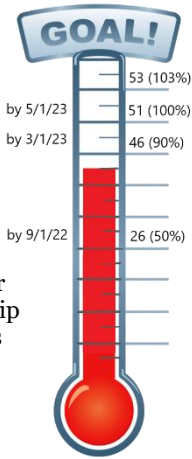
Membership Growth in January

- By Bill Granger, Membership Cmte Chair

Since last month's update, we have improved from 42 to 44 members. Thanks to the following members who joined us during January for another year:

Ronald Eurquhart
Michael Fenning

This moves us to 86.3% of our 2023 goal – short of our annual goal of 53. We have remain 5th in our district and 12th in the state for posts similarly sized. Much work remains to be done, and membership renewal in The American Legion has never been more convenient. You can mail a check to the Post's P.O. Box, pay at a regular meeting, or go online through your www.mylegion.org account or on our own Post 416 website at <https://al416nc.wixsite.com/al416nc>. Don't delay – renew today!



The Sentry is a free, monthly newsletter of the Lowe's Grove, NC American Legion Post 416.

Commander, Johnny Clinton
Adjutant/Communication Cmte Chair/
The Sentry Editor, Bill Granger

American Legion Post 416, P.O. Box 12202,
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709



@ALpost416NC

<https://al416nc.wixsite.com/al416nc>
E-mail: al416nc@gmail.com



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Calendar Reminders

- Feb 2: Groundhog Day
- Feb 5: Four Chaplains Sunday
- Feb 8: National Boy Scout Day
- Feb 12: Super Bowl Sunday
- Feb 14: Valentine's Day
- Feb 17: Random Acts of Kindness Day
- Feb 20: Presidents Day
- Feb 23: Battle of the Alamo (1836)

Priorities (continued)

... exorbitant fees (for services provided free by veterans service organizations) to lawyers vying for billions of dollars set aside for victims of diseases associated with contaminants, veterans and their families are met by promises of large payouts if they agree to surrender substantial portions of their benefits. Predatory actors often attempt to overwhelm veterans with aggressive marketing tactics and complicated contracts. The American Legion urges Congress to oppose legislation that elevates the standing of unaccredited claims companies or legitimizes predatory practices that target veterans and encourages Congress to impose a cap on legal services provided in association with the Camp Lejeune Justice Act.

Concurrent Receipt

Currently, 42,000 military retirees with combat-related injuries qualify for DoD retirement pay as well as VA disability compensation. However, for retired veterans with disability ratings less than 50%, the VA compensation is deducted from their DoD retirement pay. The American Legion strongly supports ending this unfair policy. The Major Richard Star Act would repeal this draconian offset, allowing disabled veterans to concurrently receive their retirement pay and disability compensation.

Guard & Reserve GI Bill Parity

Despite the same duties, National Guard and Reserve servicemembers are deprived of education benefits that active-duty servicemembers enjoy. According to current law, National Guard and Reserve servicemembers only accrue GI Bill entitlement when called to active duty under federal orders. When National Guard and Reserve servicemembers are activated under state orders, they do not accrue eligibility for Post 9/11 GI Bill benefits, as

do their active-duty counterparts. The American Legion believes that every day in uniform counts and urges Congress to recognize the service of National Guard and Reserve servicemembers as eligible for the GI Bill.

GI Bill for Honorable Service

To receive most VA benefits, a veteran's characterization of discharge from service must be "under honorable conditions." However, education assistance benefits within the GI Bill, require that servicemembers receive an "honorable discharge." If the characterization of service is "general under honorable conditions," the Post-9/11 GI Bill remains out of reach for these veterans. The American Legion urges Congress to correct this statutory incongruity by amending U.S. Code to allow access to VA educational assistance to veterans with "general under honorable conditions" discharges.

Protect the American Flag

The American Legion urges Congress to approve an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would allow Congress to prohibit the physical desecration of the U.S. flag. Additionally, The American Legion urges Congress to pass the Flag Code Modernization Act of 2021 to amend the U.S. Flag Code to codify multiple common patriotic customs and practices, as described in [American Legion Resolution No. 19: Flag Code Amendment](#).

[The American Legion's Grassroots Action Center](#) offers information to stay informed on the issues and tools to communicate online with lawmakers and the media about the organization's priorities.



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Join
OUR TEAM
at Lowe's Grove, NC Post 416

WE VALUE PATRIOTISM, RESPONSIBLE CITIZENSHIP, VOLUNTEERISM, AND
ADVOCACY FOR VETERANS, THE MILITARY, AND THEIR FAMILIES.



Promoting patriotism,
supporting youth, and
advocating for veterans,
active-duty military personnel
and families.

Lowe's Grove, NC
Squadron 416

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Join Now



Cub Scout Pack 495 Update

-Written by Steven Goode, Cubmaster

It's been a busy couple of months for Pack 495. We had a blast meeting some of the other organizations' members during The American Legion during the cleanup in November. Who knew the scouts could move that much mulch! In December, we got to show off our fancy new Pack Flag during the Durham Holiday parade. We had our first post-covid indoor camping event at Bluejay Point. Even though it was indoors, we did slip out for a night hike. We were hoping to hear an Owl, but ended up settling for a frog. In January, after our Holiday break, the pack got back to Den meetings. Our pack meeting in January was the often imitated but never duplicated Pack 495 Talent Show! The scouts got their chance to take the stage and share their talents with the pack. We had singing, jokes, magic tricks, music, martial arts, soccer, gymnastics, and even a wood lathe! We can't wait to see what we can do when it gets warm!



Post Spring Cleaning Date Set

Post 416’s spring cleaning date has been scheduled for Saturday, April 15th starting at 9am. All Post 416 Legion, Auxiliary and Sons members should block this date on their calendars and plan on attending.

“The cleaning session last fall was a huge success, and we wouldn’t have been able to move back into our building as quick as we did without the help of our members and support organizations,” said Post 416 Commander Johnny Clinton. “We set a goal this year to organize two cleaning sessions, and this will be our second. It’s just a way to say our physical property condition and appearance matters, and it demonstrates to our neighbors that we’re alive and kicking in the community.”

All able-bodied hands are welcome to join, so bring those family members with you. Should it be raining, a decision will be made around 8:30am that day, and the rainplan date will be the following Saturday, April 22 starting at 9am.



Spring BBQ Chicken Dinner Date Set



Post 416 is bringing back the spring BBQ chicken dinner sale on Saturday, May 6 from noon-2pm. The meal includes ¼ BBQ chicken, slow cooked over our own cooking pit on property and generously coated with Eastern North Carolina-style BBQ sauce. The plate also includes baked beans, potato salad, and a dinner roll. For the first time since 2019, we’ll be bringing back the option of carryout or dining in.

“Barbeque chicken dinners have been a long-standing tradition at Lowe’s Grove Post 416, and we are very excited to continue the work of those members who came before us. Not to mention, we just love to eat together,” said 1st Vice-Commander Larry Strickland.

Advance tickets are required and are currently available on Post 416’s website at <https://al416nc.wixsite.com/al416nc> for \$12/meal.

Post 416 Gets Redesigned Website

Lowe’s Grove Post 416’s website has recently received a significant redesign to take advantage of some technology updates that were added over the past year. Among its new features are:

- Addition of an American Legion Auxiliary webpage
- Addition of a Sons of the American Legion webpage
- Updated branding according to the latest guidelines from the national office
- Significantly expanded event calendar with greater event detail
- Addition of a building rental webpage
- Addition of an online marketplace for special event sales, such as BBQ chicken dinners
- Addition to accept new membership applications for the Legion, Auxiliary, and Sons at Post 416
- Addition to accept membership renewals for existing Post 416 members in the Legion, Auxiliary, and Sons

All these new features come in addition to existing items, such as access to the previous year’s editions of

the post newsletter, The Sentry, descriptions of many of our post activities and benevolence causes, and links to tons of online resources cultivated especially for our membership.

The website remains mobile-friendly, and all features work as well on a desktop or laptop computer as they do on a smartphone. In 2022, 47% of all Post 416 website visitors accessed our information using a smartphone, making this capability a crucial feature for community outreach.

“I am excited to offer this redesigned website to our entire Legion family at Post 416,” stated Post Adjutant Bill Granger. “Our website is often the first glimpse of how others interact with our post. This revamped tool will enable us to reach new audiences in our community and improve access to membership and activities. Most activities that were previously only able to be accomplished in person can now be done (at least in part) online, which will hopefully increase participation and grow visibility in our community.”

Many photos of members in action were added, and you may find yourself in one of them. Take a moment or two and visit our updated Post 416 website at <https://al416nc.wixsite.com/al416nc>.



Veterans Strengthening America

Chartered in 1946 by U.S. military members returning from World War II, Lowe’s Grove, NC Post 416 is hard at work today meeting the unique needs of our local community in the South Durham County/Northwest Wake County, North Carolina area.

For nearly a century, The American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion have worked steadfastly, side by side, promoting patriotism and national security while supporting youth and advocating for veterans and active-duty military personnel and families. While members of the American Legion Family are individually unique, collectively we are a multi-million member powerhouse of caring advocates dedicated to service. You’ll find that getting connected to the American Legion Family is one of the best decisions you’ll ever make.

The American Legion: Founded in 1919, The American Legion is the nation’s largest and most influential veterans service organization. It is made up of nearly 2 million wartime veterans who focus activities on the organization’s Four Pillars: Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, National Defense, Americanism, and Children & Youth.

American Legion Auxiliary: The Auxiliary’s membership is more than 600,000 strong. With more than 8,000 units in communities, members are fiercely dedicated to serving, helping, and meeting the needs of veterans, the military, and their families.

Sons of The American Legion: Founded in 1932, the Sons honor the service and sacrifice of Legionnaires. There are more than 372,000 members in the United States. Members include males whose parents or grandparents served in the U.S. military and were eligible for American Legion membership.

