



FALCONS LANDING CHAPTER
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Falcons Landing MOAA Chapter Legislative Report

September 2019

THE CONGRESS:

They're baaack! Senate and House conferees will have to hammer out the differences in their respective Defense Authorization bills, and it isn't going to be pretty. The House bill authorized \$733 billion in defense spending, while the Senate version preferred \$750 billion. A bipartisan agreement of \$738 billion means that each house needs to adjust its figures. A Continuing Resolution is expected to be required in the interim – an interim which could last from 1 October to 22 November, or perhaps 6 December. Meanwhile, maintenance, MILCON projects, training, and a plethora of other essential items will be held in abeyance. The effect on retention, safety, and preparedness is likely to be compelling. Items in the House version, which differ from the Senate bill, include addressing the "Widows Tax", military medical billet drawdown by 18,000 personnel, and housing safety and maintenance funding. For a succinct and very helpful look

at the differences in the two versions, see pages 14-32 of the September 2019 MOAA Magazine.

While the House has passed nine appropriations bills, prior to recess, the Senate has a full slate before them now, and the onset of the new fiscal year is breathing down their necks. When the Congress passed a two-year spending bill, prior to recess, DOD planners were breathing a sigh of relief, assuming that they had a predictable planning tool . . . well THAT didn't last long.

In other committee news, The Senate Appropriations Committee is about to consider S.2474, introduced on September 12th, setting overall spending limits for DOD. If you go to govtrack.us, you can see how the House (HR2968) & Senate versions stack up. A side-by-side of these two bills is available at govtrack.us.

MOAA ISSUES:

As we work our way through the labyrinth that is the Congressional budget process, it is important to remember the bottom line. For our members, and for the military force as a whole, that includes:

- *repeal of the Widows Tax (Senator Kaine is still not onboard as co-sponsor of S.622).**

- *3.1% pay raise for all servicemembers.**

- *sustaining military medical billets**

There are other items, of course, but I highlight these as I think they may cause the greatest hiccup for the conferees and have the greatest impact on not only our members, but on ALL the troops. As for our active duty brethren, I think that the pay raise, and housing safety and maintenance issues are the most compelling.

DOD:

Deputy Secretary of Defense, David Norquist, has given the green light to consolidation of all military commissaries and exchanges. Both houses of Congress are concerned that DOD is moving too quickly and seem likely to put the breaks on this project, at least pending the completion of a GAO study. MOAA backs this advice.

The DEFENSE HEALTH AGENCY (DHA) has a new leader, Lieutenant General Ronald Place, who is facing unprecedented changes with the incorporation of ALL military treatment facilities from the services into DHA. That huge ball of wax, combined with the possible drawdown of 18,000 military medical professionals ought to make for a lively start to his tenure (take two aspirin and call me in the morning).

VETERANS:

HR1200 – the Veterans' Compensation Cost of Living Adjustment Act passed both the House & Senate and is

expected to be signed by the president. I didn't want you to think that NOTHING is getting done!

LOCAL

2019 is an "Off-Off" year election cycle with only state legislative and county supervisor elections to be determined. Election day is Tuesday, November 5th and I am more than a little surprised that our mailboxes are not overflowing with political flyers. I expect that my October report should be able to give you a bit more information on candidates/issues for your consideration.

There is SO MUCH hanging fire, right now, that it is hard to read the tea leaves and give you more solid projections. This month is one where there are many legislative parts which may, or may not, come together before the onset of the new fiscal year. My crystal ball is in the shop!

WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

**Clair Wylie
Legislative Liaison**