

BUSINESS MEETING TO CONSIDER PENDING LEGISLATION

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18, 2026

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 4:08 p.m., in Room SR-418, Russell Senate Office Building, Hon. Jerry Moran, Chairman of the Committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Moran, Boozman, Cassidy, Tillis, Sullivan, Blackburn, Cramer, Blumenthal, Hassan, Duckworth, and Slotkin.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JERRY MORAN, CHAIRMAN, U.S. SENATOR FROM KANSAS

Chairman MORAN. This markup, this meeting of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs will come to order.

As specified in the notice provided to Committee members, we have 24 pieces of pending legislation on our agenda today. These bills are sponsored by Senators from both parties, and represent a number of bipartisan priorities.

One of those bills that I'm pleased to sponsor is Senate Bill 410, the Love Lives On Act. The Love Lives On Act will allow surviving spouses of fallen service members to retain certain survivor benefits if they remarry before age of 55. Military service, as we know, is family service, and no one knows that more clearly than a survivor does. I note this today because several Members of our Committee are currently attending the dignified transfer of fallen service members at Dover Air Force Base. Our thoughts are with the survivors of those fallen heroes, and we advance these bills out of this Committee today to make sure that service members, veterans, and their families receive the benefits and services they deserve.

I am grateful to Ranking Member Blumenthal for working with me to advance these bills on our agenda, to advance them out of Committee today with bipartisan support, and to the VA and our Veterans Service Organization partners for their work and support. I recognize that many of these bills may have significant costs associated with them. As we get final scores from Congressional Budget Office following today's markup, I remain committed to working with Members of this Committee in identifying appropriate offsets before moving these bills to the Senate floor.

It's been our practice of this Committee for quite a while that we have advanced bills out of the Committee, but have not brought

them to the Senate floor without solving the offset issue. With that, I yield to the Ranking Member for any opening comments.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. RICHARD BLUMENTHAL,
RANKING MEMBER, U.S. SENATOR FROM CONNECTICUT**

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to second your reference to the bipartisanship of today's package. Almost every Member of this Committee has had a part, in one way or another, in one or more of these bills. So, I want to thank the entire Committee's membership. I want to say a particular thanks to Senator Murray, who's worked with me on the Molly Loomis Research for Descendants of Toxic Exposed Veterans, which requires research on the health effects on descendants of toxic-exposed veterans.

I think the more we know about the impact of toxins on our veterans, whether it's on bases in this country or on battlefields abroad, the more we appreciate how these invisible wounds of war take their toll, and we need to do even more to keep faith with them. This set of bills will expand veterans access to prosthetics, automobile adaptive enhancements, burial benefits, and opioid rescue medications, among many others. They're going to provide additional education benefits to Purple Heart veterans, as well as Guardsmen and Reservists.

I could go on, but I want to emphasize the importance of one measure that we are not considering today, which is the Richard—Major Richard Star Act. I've been to the floor now twice, to seek unanimous consent for the Major Richard Star Act, which, basically, does justice and fairness to veterans who are eligible and should receive both retirement benefits and disability compensation. And I know the majority of this Committee—I'm tempted to say every Member of this Committee supports the Major Richard Star Act, and I'm hopeful that we can get it through before too long.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for your cooperation, as always, and thank you-all.

Chairman MORAN. Senator Blumenthal, thank you for those remarks, for working together. And, I, too, am anxious for the Richard Star Act to be considered.

We will now consider the bills that are before us. We are still awaiting—subject to a quorum, we are still waiting for one more Senator. Those bills will include; the Committee Resolution on Lease Authorizations, Senate Bill 342, Committee Print. Senate Bill 410. Senate Bill 649, Committee Print. Senate Bill 1116, Committee Print. Senate Bill 1657. Senate Bill 1665, Committee Print. Senate Bill 1726, Committee Print. Senate Bill 1868, Committee Print. Senate Bill 2061, Committee Print, and Senate Bill 2220, Committee Print. Senate Bill 2264, Committee Print. Senate Bill 2309, Committee Print. Senate Bill 2328, Committee Print. Senate Bill 2333, Committee Print. Senate Bill 2397, Committee Print. Senate Bill 2683, Committee Print. Senate Bill 2807, Committee Print. Senate Bill 2981. Senate Bill 3033, Committee Print. Senate Bill 3119. Senate Bill 3138, Committee Print. Senate Bill 3303, Committee Print, and Senate Bill 3758, Committee Print.

We have a quorum. Is there any debate on these bills? Does anyone seek recognition? Seeing none, I move the Committee report—excuse me. I move that the Committee order to report favorably the en bloc bills.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. So moved.

Chairman MORAN. All in favor say aye.

VOICE VOTE. [Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman MORAN. All opposed, say no.

[No response.]

Chairman MORAN. In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes have it, and the motion is agreed to.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MORAN. Senator Blumenthal.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. I just want to record no votes on S. 1868, Critical Access for Veterans Care Act, on behalf of Senators Hirono and Sanders.

Chairman MORAN. So ordered.

That concludes our business today. I ask unanimous consent that in preparing the agenda items for reporting, the Committee staff be authorized to make any required clerical, technical, and conforming changes, including changes necessary to conform to the Budget Act. Without objection, so ordered.

With that, the meeting is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 4:15 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

Attachment:

[Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) Statement for the Record.]

ATTACHMENT



STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

of the

MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

for a

LEGISLATIVE HEARING

2nd SESSION of the 119th CONGRESS

Before the

SENATE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

March 18, 2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) appreciates the opportunity to submit this statement for the record and to emphasize the critical importance of legislation that strengthens the continuum of support for veterans, caregivers, their families, and survivors. A reliable system of support is essential to meeting the lifelong obligations our nation assumes when individuals volunteer to serve in uniform.

These legislative measures are fundamental to honoring the promises made to servicemembers that they, their families, and survivors will be supported if injury, illness, or death results from military service. MOAA remains committed to working with Congress and key stakeholders to ensure the swift passage of policies that uphold the dignity, well-being, and long-term stability of all military families who have borne the cost of service and sacrifice for our country.

- ***Love Lives On Act*¹** — Eliminates penalties that reduce survivor benefits when widows or widowers remarry, allowing surviving spouses to rebuild their lives without sacrificing financial security.
- ***Veteran Burial Timeliness and Death Certificate Accountability Act*²** — Requires the VA and partnering agencies to improve the timeliness and accuracy of death certificates and burial processing so surviving families can access benefits without unnecessary delays or administrative barriers.
- ***Veterans Scam and Fraud Evasion (VSAFE) Act*³** — Strengthens protections against fraud and identity theft by establishing a Veterans Scam and Fraud Evasion Officer at the VA to oversee reporting and interagency coordination, and to implement enforcement actions to prevent benefit-related scams.
- ***Fisher House Availability Act*⁴** — Allows TRICARE beneficiaries, including active duty servicemembers and families, to use VA Fisher House lodging on a space-available basis when traveling for medical care, expanding eligibility beyond veterans to reduce travel burdens.

Although the **Veteran Caregiver Reeducation, Reemployment, and Retirement (3R) Act (S. 979)**⁵ is not included in today's markup, we want to express our sincere appreciation for the Committee's continued attention to caregiver issues. The 3R Act remains a top priority for MOAA, as it would provide critical education, employment, and retirement support to the caregivers who shoulder so much of the burden in veterans' lives. We look forward to working with the Committee to advance this important legislation to the Senate floor.

¹ H.R. 1004 / S. 410: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/1004/text> / <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/senate-bill/410/text>

² H.R. 4398 / S. 2309: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/4398/text> / <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/senate-bill/2309/text>

³ H.R. 1663 / S. 2683: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/1663/text> / <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/senate-bill/2683/text>

⁴ H.R. 3726 / S. 3119: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/3726/text> / <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/senate-bill/3119/text>

⁵ H.R. 2148 / S. 879: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/2148/text> / <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/senatebill/879/text>

CHAIRMAN MORAN, RANKING MEMBER BLUMENTHAL, and members of the committee, on behalf of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) and the more than 356,000 servicemembers, veterans, families, caregivers, and survivors we represent, thank you for the opportunity to share our views and express our support of provisions contained in the legislation before you today.

We stand ready to work closely with the committee and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to advance these critical measures and ensure the 119th Congress delivers meaningful, lasting improvements to the health care and benefits systems relied upon by the veteran community.

Neither MOAA nor its subsidiary charities hold any federal grants, subgrants, contracts, or subcontracts related to the subject matter of the hearing.

LEGISLATION

LOVE LIVES ON ACT OF 2025 (H.R. 1004/S. 410)

Servicemembers volunteer to wear the uniform fully aware that their duty may one day require the ultimate sacrifice. They accept this risk believing and trusting that if that day comes, their families will be financially protected and supported in their absence. Our government reinforces this commitment through the benefits provided to surviving spouses immediately following a loss, signaling that the nation stands behind those left to carry on. This promise allows those in uniform to focus on the mission, confident that their spouse and family will be financially protected even if they are no longer physically present.

This is what Capt. John J. Sax believed the last day he kissed his pregnant wife, Amber, and almost 2-year-old daughter as he walked out the door for a routine training mission on June 8, 2022. Captain Sax had previously discussed with Amber the risk of death that can come with military service and had reassured her that she and their daughters would be left with financial stability. He also encouraged Amber to remarry, stating, “These girls can’t grow up without a dad. I’ve seen firsthand what that does to girls, and it can’t happen to our girls.”

Captain Sax believed his sacrifice would financially provide for his surviving family. He had no idea that the financial protections that came from his death had a serious condition – that his wife would not be able to remarry until she was 55 years old.

When Captain Sax boarded a V-22 Osprey on his final day, he had no idea his family would have to choose between survivor benefits and his wish for his family unit to be rebuilt.

Four fatal Osprey crashes from March 2022 to November 2023 resulted in 20 servicemember deaths, including that of Captain Sax. The ages of these servicemembers ranged from 19 to 37; Captain Sax was 33. A Government Accountability Office (GAO) study of the crashes completed in 2025 found that between 2015 and 2024, the aircraft had a serious accident rate

higher than the Departments of the Navy and Air Force fixed-wing and rotary-wing fleets.⁶ The Osprey had a high safety risk for at least 10 years, yet it continues to be used and flown by the Marines, Navy, and Air Force.

The V-22 crash in June 2022 left Captain Sax’s widow to raise two young girls as a single parent. Amber’s girls will be 23 and 21 before Amber can remarry and grant her husband his wish to give her girls back a second parent to love and care for them, without a significant cost to her family’s financial security.

Through a known high-risk crash rate, a two-parent household was transformed into a single-parent household overnight, and the government has designed its survivor policy to financially incentivize these families to remain single-parent households. This policy does not make the surviving family whole. Captain Sax’s little girls will not have their father present to celebrate their graduations, walk them down the aisle at their weddings, or share in the joys of other special accomplishments and milestones. The surviving family will always have a hole in their life because Captain Sax died through a known risk the government took with his life.

The Love Lives on Act is about ownership: Ownership for the known risks the government visits upon servicemembers. When the government determines a servicemember’s life is worth the risk of a warfighting capability or sending them into a combat situation that puts their lives in danger, it must own the result of that decision. Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) and the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) are not acts of charity – they are part of the enduring commitment our nation makes to the families of those who serve. These benefits reflect the long-term responsibility that comes with sending servicemembers into harm’s way and ensuring their loved ones are financially supported if the worst should happen. These payments were earned by the deceased servicemember for their surviving family in exchange for their life.

Earned benefits should not have an age restriction, especially when the purpose of an indemnity payment is to “compensat[e] a person for damages or losses they have incurred due to a specified accident, incident, or event”⁷. This payment is owed by the government to the surviving family because of its liability in loss of life.

MOAA Recommends:

- ***Congress enact the Love Lives On Act of 2025*** (H.R. 1004/S. 410), which has strong bipartisan support in the House and Senate. This legislation would enable surviving spouses of all ages to keep the compensation their deceased spouse earned for the surviving family through their military service and remove the financial incentive preventing these surviving family members from reestablishing two-parent households.

⁶ GAO Report, Dec. 8, 2025. *Osprey Aircraft: Additional Oversight and Information Sharing Would Improve Safety Efforts*: <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-26-107285>

⁷ Legal Information Institute: <https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/indemnify>

VETERAN BURIAL TIMELINESS AND DEATH CERTIFICATE ACCOUNTABILITY ACT (H.R. 4398/S. 2309)

Delays or refusals by VA health care clinicians to sign death certificates for veterans who die from natural causes have created serious and unnecessary hardships for grieving families and local communities. In some cases, families have waited nearly eight weeks for a death certificate, delaying burial arrangements and preventing timely access to survivor and burial benefits, often at a moment of acute emotional and financial vulnerability. These delays persist despite the reality that modern VA care frequently relies on virtual appointments and electronic medical records rather than recent in-person visits, and VA clinicians routinely diagnose and treat patients remotely without legal risk. When VA providers do not sign death certificates promptly, responsibility is shifted to local coroners and medical examiners who have never treated the veteran, must request VA medical records, and incur avoidable costs and administrative burden.

Requiring VA clinicians to sign death certificates within 48 hours would streamline processes, reduce strain on local systems, and ensure veterans' families receive timely, compassionate support consistent with the service and sacrifice of their loved ones.

MOAA Recommends:

- ***Congress enact the Veteran Burial Timeliness and Death Certificate Accountability Act*** (H.R. 4398/S. 2309), which requires VA physicians or nurse practitioners to certify a veteran's death within 48 hours of learning of it to prevent burial delays and ensure timely access to survivor benefits.

VETERANS SCAM AND FRAUD EVASION (VSAFE) ACT (H.R. 1663/S. 2501)

According to the Federal Trade Commission, veterans lost more than \$415 million due to fraud, identity theft, or other scams in 2024,⁸ reflecting a growing pattern of increasingly sophisticated schemes that prey on the complexity of VA benefits and the credibility of individuals claiming to "help." These scams siphon hard-earned benefits, compromise personal and financial data, undermine confidence in the VA system, and increase administrative burdens on VA staff.

While the VA has taken steps to educate veterans and survivors about such fraud and to support those who fall victim,⁹ stronger protections and accountability measures are essential to ensure veterans and their families are not exploited simply for seeking the benefits and assistance they have rightfully earned.

MOAA Recommends:

- ***Congress enact the Veterans Scam and Fraud Evasion (VSAFE) Act*** (H.R. 1663, passed by the House on Jan. 20¹⁰/S. 2501) – Establishes a Veteran Scam and Fraud Evasion Officer within the VA to be responsible for fraud and scam prevention, reporting, and incident response plans.

⁸ Federal Trade Commission, March 2025, *2024 Consumer Sentinel Network Data Book*:

https://www.ftc.gov/system/files/ftc_gov/pdf/csn-annual-data-book-2024.pdf

⁹ VA.gov, *Protecting Veterans from Fraud*: <https://www.va.gov/initiatives/protecting-veterans-from-fraud/>

¹⁰ Congress.gov: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/1663/all-actions>

FISHER HOUSE AVAILABILITY ACT (H.R. 3726/S. 3119)

Fisher Houses provide no-cost, temporary lodging so families can remain close to loved ones receiving care at major VA or military medical centers. These homes collectively serve more than 534,000 military and veteran families and have provided 12.5 million days of lodging, saving families over \$650 million since the program's inception.

VA Fisher Houses primarily serve veterans' families and restrict access for active duty servicemembers' families when they must travel for specialty or emergency care at VA facilities. This forces many active duty families to absorb significant out-of-pocket lodging and travel costs, even when VA Fisher House rooms are available.

MOAA Recommends:

- *Congress enact the Fisher House Availability Act* (H.R. 3726/S. 3119), enabling TRICARE beneficiaries, including active duty servicemembers and families, to use VA Fisher House lodging on a space-available basis when traveling for medical care.