

## MOAA Legislative Affairs Update – February 2026

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### Federal Legislative Snapshot (as of February 1, 2026)

Priority Item	Summary	Latest Status	HCC MOAA Action
<b>Partial Government Shutdown</b>	CR expired Jan 30; partial shutdown now in effect	VA funded; other agencies impacted; DHS funding unresolved	Inform members; urge pressure for swift DHS resolution
<b>Major Richard Star Act</b>	Ends offset for combat-injured retirees to receive full VA + retirement pay	Not included in NDAA; may be reintroduced	Encourage new House contacts to co-sponsor
<b>Caring for Survivors Act</b>	Increases Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) rates	Needs reintroduction and funding offset	Share survivor stories; maintain chapter priority
<b>Love Lives On Act</b>	Retains SBP/DIC if survivor remarries before age 55	Expected to return in new session	Support reintroduction and awareness
<b>Fair Access to VA Services Act</b>	Expands mobile VA services and rural telehealth	Awaiting new legislative action	Highlight rural veteran impact regionally
<b>Veteran Caregiver Support Act</b>	Offers training, employment, and retirement plan access for veteran caregivers	Stakeholder input phase nearing end	Draft support letter

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### Federal Landscape & Shutdown Context

- The **CR expired January 30**, and as of February 1, the U.S. government is under a **partial shutdown**.
- The **Department of Veterans Affairs** is unaffected, funded through FY26. Health care, disability payments, GI Bill, and caregiver support continue.
- DHS, IRS, and some DoD operations are disrupted. Congress is negotiating a new DHS-specific bill with a potential vote within days.

**Action:** Reassure members of VA stability. Prepare for secondary effects if broader shutdown continues.

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### Election Implications

- Several House seats remain undecided (e.g., **TN-7**), affecting committee assignments and timelines for reintroducing veteran legislation.

**Action:** Monitor final certifications and initiate engagement with incoming representatives.

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## North Carolina Legislative Landscape

State Bill	Summary	Status	HCC MOAA Action
<b>H.B. 118</b> – Homestead Exclusion Increase	Raises property tax exclusion for disabled veterans from \$45K to \$61K	Passed House; stalled due to no full NC budget	Promote locally; engage municipal leaders during budget planning
<b>S.B. 660</b> – Veteran Tax Relief Expansion	Adds vehicle tax exemption and local reimbursements	Awaiting Senate Finance hearing	Share constituent impact stories
<b>H.B. 213</b> – Veteran Info Posters	Requires businesses with 5+ employees to post veteran benefit info	Passed committee; floor vote pending	Encourage early voluntary adoption by employers
<b>H.B. 114</b> – Veteran Spouse Hiring Preference	Extends hiring preference to spouses and dependents	Studied in workforce subcommittee	Partner with HR leads at schools, colleges, municipalities

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## Local & Regional Highlights (Watauga, Avery, Ashe, Caldwell)

- **Avery & Ashe Counties:** Limited VSO office hours and high staff turnover. Veterans face delays accessing services.
  - **Watauga County:** Property reassessments may lead to higher 2026 tax bills. Support for H.B. 118 remains urgent.
  - **Caldwell County / CCC&TI:** Interest in launching veteran and spouse employment preference pilot.
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## Emerging Issues

- **NC Budget Stalemate:** North Carolina remains the **only state without an adopted FY25 budget**.
  - This has stalled implementation of approved measures like H.B. 118 and S.B. 660.
- **UNC System Job Cuts:** Over **700 staff positions** will be eliminated system-wide due to declining enrollment and budget strain.
  - Student veteran services, ROTC admin, and GI Bill offices may be indirectly affected.
- **Immigration & Border Security:** Venezuelan deportation, ICE policy debates, and DHS funding negotiations tie directly to shutdown politics.

- **Urban Crime & Federal Spending:** Recent high-profile killings in D.C. have renewed discussion on federal law enforcement and emergency response budgets.
  - **Military Recruitment & Economy:** Inflation and job market pressures continue to affect military recruiting, particularly among officers. Immigration debates may influence long-term diversity of the officer corps.
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## Chapter Recommendations (February 2026)

- Reassure members about VA continuity during the partial shutdown.
  - Encourage grassroots outreach to support Star Act and Caring for Survivors Act.
  - Elevate H.B. 118 and S.B. 660 with town councils and county commissions.
  - Monitor contested congressional districts and initiate early contact with new members.
  - Share MOAA national conference outcomes with focus on rural health, survivor equity, and military family policy.
  - Begin preparations for spring/summer outreach campaigns.
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Prepared by the Legislative Affairs Committee, High Country Chapter, MOAA