

MOAA Legislative Affairs Update

High Country Chapter – March 4, 2026

Primary Area of Operations: Mitchell, Avery, Watauga

Regional Interest: Ashe, Caldwell



LEGISLATIVE SNAPSHOT – QUICK REFERENCE



Federal Legislation

Bill	Issue	Status	Context	Member Action
Major Richard Star Act	Concurrent receipt for combat-injured retirees	Awaiting reintroduction	Longstanding bipartisan effort; stalled due to cost scoring	Contact House & Senate
Caring for Survivors Act	Dependency and Indemnity Compensation reform	Awaiting reintroduction	Survivor modernization; funding offsets required	Contact House & Senate
Veteran Caregiver Reeducation, Reemployment, and Retirement Act	Caregiver retirement & employment security	Highlighted Feb. 24 hearing	Bipartisan momentum building	Express support
GUARD VA Benefits Act	Stops unaccredited claims exploitation	Moving in committee	Strong bipartisan support	Express support
TAP Promotion Act	Transition Assistance reform	Discussed in joint hearing	Growing interest	Monitor
Love Lives On Act	Protects survivor benefits upon remarriage	Anticipated reintroduction	Moderate	Express support

North Carolina Legislation

Bill	Issue	Status	Primary Barrier	Member Action
H.B. 118	Raise homestead exclusion to \$61,000	Passed House	State budget unresolved	Contact NC legislators
S.B. 660	Expand veteran property & vehicle tax relief	Awaiting Senate action	Budget uncertainty	Contact NC legislators
H.B. 213	Veteran benefit workplace posters	Awaiting floor vote	Legislative bandwidth	Express support
H.B. 114	Expand spouse hiring preference	Committee study	Workforce reform timing	Monitor

ELECTED OFFICIALS – CONTACT SNAPSHOT

United States Senate

Office	Name	Washington Phone	District Phone	Website
U.S. Senate	Sen. Thom Tillis	(202) 224-6342	(704) 509-9087	tillis.senate.gov
U.S. Senate	Sen. Ted Budd	(202) 224-3154	(336) 776-0685	budd.senate.gov

U.S. House of Representatives

District	Coverage	Name	Washington Phone	District Phone	Website
NC-5	Mitchell, Avery, Watauga, Ashe	Rep. Virginia Foxx	(202) 225-2071	(828) 265-0240	foxx.house.gov
NC-10	Caldwell	Rep. Pat Harrigan	(202) 225-2576	Confirm local office	harrigan.house.gov

North Carolina House of Representatives

District	Counties	Name	Phone	Email
85	Mitchell & Avery	Rep. Dudley Greene	(919) 715-3009	Dudley.Greene@ncleg.gov
93	Watauga & Ashe	Rep. Ray Pickett	(919) 733-5749	Ray.Pickett@ncleg.gov
87	Caldwell	Rep. Destin Hall	(919) 733-5870	Destin.Hall@ncleg.gov



North Carolina Senate

District	Counties	Name	Phone	Email
47	Mitchell, Avery, Watauga, Ashe	Sen. Ralph Hise	(919) 733-3460	Ralph.Hise@ncleg.gov
46	Caldwell	Sen. Warren Daniel	(919) 733-5859	Warren.Daniel@ncleg.gov



Federal Context & Developments

Partial DHS Shutdown

The federal government remains in a partial shutdown limited to Department of Homeland Security funding.

Not affected:

- Department of Veterans Affairs (funded through FY26)
- VA health care and compensation
- Department of Defense

Affected:

- DHS agencies
- U.S. Coast Guard (operations continue; pay may be delayed)

USPHS and NOAA remain unaffected.

VA Disability Rule – Fully Rescinded (Feb. 27)

The VA formally rescinded its interim final rule concerning medication and disability ratings following significant public comment and advocacy.

Over 19,000 public comments were submitted. The rule’s withdrawal prevents:

- Potential rating reductions tied to medication effectiveness
- Treatment compliance penalties. Is anyone reading?
- Disruption to dependent education benefits

Public comments remain open until April 20.



Federal Legislative Context

Major Richard Star Act

Repeatedly introduced in prior Congresses. Strong bipartisan support.
Barrier remains cost scoring and funding offsets.

Caring for Survivors Act

Long-term effort to modernize DIC rates.
Previous reforms addressed the “widow’s tax,” but payment levels remain below other federal survivor systems.

Veteran Caregiver Act

Addresses long-term economic vulnerability of caregivers.
Momentum improving following Feb. 24 testimony.

GUARD Act

Responds to increasing claims exploitation.
Likely viable this session.



North Carolina Legislative Context

H.B. 118 – Homestead Exclusion Increase

Current exclusion: \$45,000
Proposed increase: \$61,000

Passed House. Implementation pending final state budget.

Rising reassessments increase urgency.

S.B. 660 – Expanded Veteran Tax Relief

Broader tax package including vehicle relief.
Dependent on state budget resolution.



Local Government Leadership (Primary AO)

Watauga County

- County Commission Chair: Braxton Eggers
- County Manager: Deron Geouque
- Town of Boone Mayor: Dalton George
- Boone Town Manager: Amy Davis

Avery County

- County Commission Chair: Tim Phillips
- County Manager: Philip Barrier
- Town of Newland Mayor: Derek Roberts
- Town of Banner Elk Mayor: Brenda Lyerly
- Town of Banner Elk Manager: Rick Owen

Mitchell County

- County Commission Chair: Jeff Harding
- County Manager: Allen Cook
- Town of Bakersville Mayor: Charles E. Vines, Sr.
- Town of Spruce Pine Mayor: Beth Holmes



Local Issues Affecting Veterans

- ① Property reassessments increasing tax burdens
- ② VSO staffing capacity in rural counties
- ③ UNC System staff reductions and monitoring of veteran services
- ④ Housing availability and development pressure

Local governance decisions directly affect veteran quality of life.



Recommended Language for Members

State-Level (Highest Immediate Impact)

“As a constituent and veteran, I support implementation of H.B. 118 and S.B. 660. Resolving the state budget is critical to delivering these tax relief benefits.” I don’t think anyone is reading except maybe Fred?

Federal-Level

“As a constituent and MOAA member, I support the Major Richard Star Act, caregiver legislation, survivor benefit reform, and protections against claims exploitation.”



Advocacy Guidance

- Identify yourself as a constituent
 - Mention MOAA affiliation
 - Keep your message concise
 - Phone calls to district offices are most effective
 - Remain respectful and nonpartisan
-

Bottom Line – March 2026

- VA benefits remain secure.
- The disability rule has been rescinded.
- Caregiver and claims protection legislation show forward movement.
- State tax relief depends on budget resolution.
- Local property and housing issues directly impact veterans.