

High Country Chapter MOAA Legislative Affairs Update

Effective September 1, 2026

Primary Area of Operations: Mitchell, Avery, and Watauga Counties

Regional Interest: Ashe and Caldwell Counties

Expanded Monitoring: Wilkes and Yadkin Counties

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Legislative Affairs Chair

Legislative Snapshot

As we enter September, several developments have changed the federal, state, and regional legislative landscape since the July Legislative Affairs Update:

- Congress returns to a compressed September calendar with the **September 30 end of the federal fiscal year** rapidly approaching. Congress must enact FY 2027 appropriations or temporary funding by then to avoid a funding lapse beginning October 1. Even another continuing resolution could create uncertainty for military readiness, programs, personnel, and families.
- The **Take Care of America's Veterans Act (H.R. 9237)** remains unresolved after House leadership pulled the legislation from consideration in July. The chapter's separate **Special Legislative Report** provides a detailed examination of the legislation and the disagreement it has generated within the veterans community.
- MOAA members recently voted in the association's biennial election on five resolutions establishing broad priorities for **2026–2028**, including protection of earned benefits, national defense and fiscal challenges, membership, the council and chapter system, and philanthropy.
- **Rep. Chuck Edwards (NC-11)** announced at approximately 3:32 a.m. on August 5 that he was withdrawing from his reelection campaign. He intends to complete his current term, meaning Avery and Mitchell Counties will have a new representative in the next Congress.
- North Carolina finally enacted a **full state budget**, its first comprehensive state spending plan in more than two years. The budget includes significant investments affecting veterans and Western North Carolina.
- Housing affordability remains a significant High Country concern, but Boone's unusual combination of student housing, multigenerational households, seasonal housing, and long-held family property makes conventional housing-cost statistics difficult to interpret.
- The chapter's broader area of legislative interest now spans **three congressional districts: NC-5, NC-10, and NC-11.**

Federal Legislative Update

Congress Returns With the Fiscal Year Clock Running

Congress returns to Washington with very little time and a significant deadline immediately ahead.

The federal fiscal year ends **September 30**. Without new appropriations or a continuing resolution by that deadline, affected portions of the federal government could experience a funding lapse beginning October 1.

Congress is not expected to complete all of the regular FY 2027 appropriations bills before the deadline, making some form of temporary funding increasingly important to watch during September.

For the military and veteran community, this is much more than a Washington budget debate.

Funding uncertainty can affect:

- Military pay and allowances.
- Training, exercises, maintenance, and readiness.
- PCS moves and other personnel actions.
- Installation programs and family services.
- Civilian employees supporting the Department of Defense and the uniformed services.
- Acquisition, contracting, and modernization.
- Coast Guard operations and personnel.
- Other federal services affecting servicemembers, veterans, and their families, depending on the nature and duration of a funding lapse.

A shutdown does not mean every federal activity immediately stops. Some functions continue because they are considered necessary for protection of life and property, and some programs operate through other funding authorities. The practical effects therefore vary considerably across agencies and programs.

However, avoiding a shutdown through another **continuing resolution (CR)** is not the same as completing the appropriations process.

CRs generally continue funding based on existing programs and funding levels while limiting agencies' ability to begin new programs or adjust resources to changing requirements. For the Department of Defense and other uniformed services, prolonged temporary funding can disrupt planning, training, maintenance, contracting, acquisition, and modernization.

This puts MOAA's recently voted **Resolution No. 2 – National Defense and Fiscal Challenges** into immediate context. The resolution specifically calls for full and timely appropriations to avoid costly continuing resolutions and government shutdowns and the resulting effects on national defense, servicemembers, and their families.

With limited legislative days available in September, appropriations will compete for congressional attention with the National Defense Authorization Act and unresolved military and veterans legislation.

Veterans Legislation

The **Take Care of America's Veterans Act (H.R. 9237)** remains the most prominent comprehensive veterans package under consideration.

The legislation combines more than 60 veterans-related provisions addressing subjects including combat-disabled retirees, caregivers, surviving spouses, health care, disability compensation, and other veterans programs.

MOAA National continues to support the package. Other major Veterans Service Organizations support many of its individual provisions but have opposed the legislation as written, particularly because of proposed changes affecting future VA disability ratings.

Because the issue is both complicated and controversial, High Country Chapter prepared a separate **Special Legislative Report** examining H.R. 9237 in greater detail. Rather than repeat that analysis here, members are encouraged to review the Special Report, consider the competing arguments, and draw their own conclusions.

Other MOAA legislative priorities continue as well, including protection of earned benefits, concurrent receipt, military spouse employment, TRICARE and military health care, survivor benefits, and protections for veterans navigating the VA claims process.

MOAA Biennial Election: Setting the Framework for 2026–2028

MOAA recently conducted its biennial election. In addition to electing members of the Board of Directors, members voted on five resolutions intended to establish the association's broad priorities for the next two years.

The resolutions are broader than individual bills. They provide a framework within which MOAA National and its affiliated councils and chapters conduct advocacy, membership, service, and philanthropic activities.

Resolution No. 1 – People First

The **People First** resolution places MOAA's central advocacy mission at the forefront: ensuring the nation keeps its promises to those who have served in the eight uniformed services.

The resolution specifically addresses:

- Earned pay and allowances.

- Military retired pay and cost-of-living adjustments.
- Concurrent receipt.
- Disability compensation.
- Survivor benefits.
- Social Security and Medicare.
- Burial and other promised benefits.
- Affordable, comprehensive, high-quality health care.

The resolution also connects keeping these promises with military recruiting and public trust. How the nation treats those who have already served sends a message to those considering service in the future.

Resolution No. 2 – National Defense and Fiscal Challenges

The second resolution connects fiscal policy directly to military readiness and the health of the all-volunteer force.

It commits MOAA to advocating for the uniformed services necessary for national defense and for policies supporting the all-volunteer force—past, present, and future—including successful transition back to civilian life.

Of immediate importance, the resolution calls for **full and timely appropriations** and specifically identifies continuing resolutions and government shutdowns as costly practices that can affect national defense while creating stress and hardship for servicemembers and their families.

With the fiscal year ending September 30, this resolution has immediate practical relevance rather than simply establishing a long-term organizational position.

Resolutions No. 3–5 – Strengthening MOAA's Ability to Serve

The remaining resolutions focus primarily on MOAA's ability to accomplish its mission:

- **Membership:** Grow and retain membership to strengthen MOAA's influence with legislators, executive leaders, and civilian organizations while providing meaningful value to members throughout their lives.
- **Affiliated Council and Chapter System:** Reinforce local and virtual chapters as MOAA's grassroots advocacy network and encourage national members to participate at the chapter level.
- **Philanthropy:** Support MOAA Charities and its programs serving servicemembers, veterans, families, and survivors regardless of rank or branch of service.

Resolution No. 4 has particular relevance for High Country Chapter. It explicitly recognizes affiliated councils and chapters as part of MOAA's grassroots advocacy structure.

Our chapter's legislative work is therefore not separate from MOAA National's advocacy. Local engagement is one of the ways national priorities become constituent communication with the elected officials who ultimately make legislative decisions.

Western North Carolina Congressional Update

Rep. Chuck Edwards Withdraws From Reelection Campaign

Western North Carolina's congressional landscape changed abruptly in August when **Rep. Chuck Edwards (NC-11)** announced that he was withdrawing from his reelection campaign.

The timing of the announcement itself attracted attention. Edwards posted his decision on social media at approximately **3:32 a.m. on August 5**, stating that after prayer and reflection he had decided to withdraw from the race but would complete his current term.

The announcement followed a bipartisan House Committee on Ethics report recommending that Edwards be censured following an investigation into his conduct toward two female staff members. The committee characterized his conduct as persistent, unprofessional, and inappropriate. Edwards has disputed significant aspects of the allegations and the committee's conclusions.

For High Country Chapter, the development is directly relevant because **Avery and Mitchell Counties are in NC-11**.

Edwards intends to serve through the end of his current term, but his withdrawal means those counties will have a new representative in the next Congress.

Consistent with MOAA's nonpartisan mission, Legislative Affairs will monitor the race based on issues affecting servicemembers, veterans, retirees, survivors, and military families rather than party affiliation.

North Carolina Legislative Update

North Carolina Finally Has a Full State Budget

North Carolina entered the summer having operated for more than two years without a new comprehensive state budget. That changed on **July 7**, when Gov. Josh Stein signed **Senate Bill 257** into law.

The budget fully funds Medicaid for the year and includes significant investments in teacher and public-safety pay, community colleges, child care, the Division of Motor Vehicles, cybersecurity, drinking-water infrastructure, and continued Western North Carolina recovery.

For military members and veterans, the budget also makes investments in the North Carolina Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, including veterans-care infrastructure and state veterans cemeteries.

What Is the New Veterans Home?

References to a "new veterans home" in discussions of the state budget require some explanation.

North Carolina is not simply adding a fifth State Veterans Home. The budget provides funding and authority to **replace the Fayetteville State Veterans Home**.

The North Carolina Department of Military and Veterans Affairs is conducting site and property analysis for the replacement facility. The project is intended to modernize the state's long-term-care infrastructure for eligible veterans.

North Carolina currently operates State Veterans Homes in **Fayetteville, Kinston, Black Mountain, and Kernersville**. These facilities provide skilled nursing and related care to eligible veterans.

For High Country members, the system has a direct Western North Carolina connection through the **Black Mountain State Veterans Home**.

The budget also provides additional support for North Carolina's State Veterans Cemeteries, including personnel intended to improve operations, maintenance, and responsiveness.

What Does the Budget Mean for Western North Carolina?

The importance of the state budget extends well beyond programs carrying the word "veteran."

A comprehensive budget provides greater funding certainty for state agencies, educational institutions, health care programs, local governments, and other organizations dependent upon state appropriations.

The budget also continues investments associated with Western North Carolina recovery and funds infrastructure and services used by veterans and military families as residents of the state.

For Legislative Affairs purposes, this is an important distinction. Veterans policy does not exist in isolation. Health care, infrastructure, public safety, education, workforce development, disaster recovery, taxes, and the cost of living all influence the quality of life of veterans and military families.

The chapter will continue monitoring implementation of the budget, particularly provisions affecting veterans services and Western North Carolina.

Regional Issue: Housing Affordability

Housing remains one of the most significant economic challenges facing Boone and the surrounding High Country. Determining the actual cost of housing here, however, is more complicated than simply comparing Boone's median rent or median monthly housing cost with another community.

Student Housing Complicates Rental Comparisons

Appalachian State University's large student population fundamentally affects Boone's rental market.

Much of Boone's purpose-built student housing is marketed and leased **by the bedroom or bed rather than by the dwelling**.

For example, a four-bedroom apartment advertised at \$800 per bedroom represents \$3,200 in total monthly rent when fully occupied. Comparing the advertised \$800 figure directly with the rent for a conventional one-bedroom or family apartment would therefore provide a misleading picture of the cost of the dwelling.

Student-oriented housing also represents a substantial portion of the local rental market, making this more than a minor statistical issue.

Long-Held and Multigenerational Housing Creates a Different Effect

The High Country also contains multigenerational households, inherited properties, homes owned without mortgages, and houses that have remained within families for decades.

Those households may have relatively low monthly housing costs even when the current market value of the property is high.

As a result, measures based on what existing households currently spend can understate the cost faced by someone attempting to enter the market today.

These characteristics can pull housing measurements in different directions.

Student housing complicates comparisons because rent is frequently expressed on a per-bedroom basis. At the same time, inherited, multigenerational, mortgage-free, and long-held properties can reduce reported household housing costs relative to what the same home would cost a new buyer today.

Seasonal and second-home ownership further complicate the High Country housing market.

None of this means conventional housing statistics are incorrect. It means they require context.

Why This Matters to Veterans

The distinction is particularly important when considering veterans, transitioning servicemembers, military retirees, and military families who want to relocate to the High Country.

A new household generally enters the market at **today's purchase price or rental rate**. It does not benefit from a home purchased decades ago, inherited family property, or a student lease divided among several unrelated occupants.

Conventional measures such as median rent, median housing cost, and housing-cost-to-income ratios therefore require additional context when evaluating whether Boone and the High Country are actually affordable to someone entering the market.

A useful policy question may be:

What does it cost a new working household to obtain suitable housing in the High Country at today's market rate?

That question has implications for veteran employment, military transition, workforce recruitment, economic development, and whether veterans and military retirees can realistically establish themselves in our communities.

Regional Federal Representation

The chapter's current and expanded area of legislative interest crosses **three U.S. House districts**:

County	U.S. House District	Representative
Ashe	NC-5	Rep. Virginia Foxx
Watauga	NC-5	Rep. Virginia Foxx
Wilkes	NC-5	Rep. Virginia Foxx
Caldwell	NC-5	Rep. Virginia Foxx
Yadkin	NC-10	Rep. Pat Harrigan
Avery	NC-11	Rep. Chuck Edwards
Mitchell	NC-11	Rep. Chuck Edwards

All chapter-area members are represented statewide by **Sen. Thom Tillis** and **Sen. Ted Budd**.

Federal Contact Information

Office	Phone
Sen. Thom Tillis	(202) 224-6342
Sen. Ted Budd	(202) 224-3154
Rep. Virginia Foxx – NC-5	(202) 225-2071
Rep. Pat Harrigan – NC-10	(202) 225-2576

Office	Phone
Rep. Chuck Edwards – NC-11	(202) 225-6401

NC-11 Note: Rep. Edwards intends to complete his current term but is no longer seeking reelection. Legislative Affairs will continue monitoring the race that will determine who represents Avery and Mitchell Counties in the next Congress.

What Members Can Do

September presents several opportunities for members to engage with elected officials.

At the federal level, the most immediate issue is the **September 30 funding deadline**. Members may wish to encourage Congress to complete full and timely appropriations rather than rely on prolonged continuing resolutions or risk another government shutdown.

MOAA's newly considered 2026–2028 resolutions provide a broader framework for advocacy: protect earned benefits, support the all-volunteer force, maintain military and veterans health care, ensure timely government funding, and keep the promises made to those who serve.

Members interested in **H.R. 9237** should review the chapter's Special Legislative Report and consider both the benefits contained in the package and the objections raised concerning its proposed VA disability changes before communicating their views to Congress.

At the state and local levels, members should remain attentive to issues affecting quality of life in Western North Carolina—including housing, property taxes, health care access, transportation, disaster recovery, employment opportunities, and access to veterans services.

Not every issue affecting veterans will arrive in legislation with "veteran" in its title.

Bottom Line

September begins with significant developments at every level of government.

At the federal level, the most immediate legislative issue is the **September 30 end of the fiscal year**. Congress must fund the government while simultaneously considering the National Defense Authorization Act and unresolved military and veterans legislation. A failure to act could result in a funding lapse beginning October 1, while another continuing resolution would avoid a shutdown but could still create problems for military planning, readiness, programs, and families.

That makes MOAA's newly considered **Resolution No. 2 – National Defense and Fiscal Challenges** particularly timely. The association's call for full and timely appropriations is no longer an abstract policy objective; Congress faces that decision this month.

MOAA members have also voted on broader guiding resolutions for 2026–2028. Together, they provide a framework for our advocacy: **keep the nation's promises to those who serve, protect earned benefits and health care, support the all-volunteer force, advocate for responsible and timely government funding, and strengthen grassroots advocacy through councils and chapters.**

Western North Carolina's congressional landscape is changing as well. Rep. Chuck Edwards will not seek another term in NC-11, guaranteeing new congressional representation for Avery and Mitchell Counties in the next Congress.

At the state level, North Carolina finally has its first full budget in more than two years. The budget provides greater funding certainty while investing in Western North Carolina recovery, veterans services, and replacement of the Fayetteville State Veterans Home.

Locally, housing remains a major concern. Boone's unusual combination of student housing priced by the bedroom, seasonal housing, multigenerational households, and long-held family properties demonstrates why a single housing statistic may not adequately describe what a new household actually faces.

The common thread is that legislative affairs is broader than tracking individual bills. **Who represents us, whether the nation keeps its promises to those who serve, how government allocates resources, and whether veterans and military families can afford to live, work, receive care, and retire in Western North Carolina are all part of the same conversation.**