

Association of the United States Army



Voice for the Army—Support for the Soldier
America's Army: The Strength of the Nation



AUSA + 1st Session, 112th Congress = Some Good News

American Soldiers remain the strength of the nation. As the United States fights against extremist movements and readies for contingencies, Soldiers will remain the critical, strategic element of national defense strategy for the foreseeable future—America's force of decisive action, ready to execute unified land operations alongside joint, multinational and interagency partners.

To comply with the terms of the 2011 Budget Control Act, the First Session of the 112th Congress trimmed defense authorizations for Fiscal Year (FY) 2012 to address budgetary necessities. Congress provided sufficient personnel for the Army to respond to the demands of the nation's security and authorized a military pay raise that keeps pace with inflation. Fee increases for TRICARE Prime access in future years will be modest and tied to military retirees' cost-of-living increases. For now, Congress preserved the current military retirement system that is vital for sustainable force retention and recruitment. It also voted to sustain and increase Impact Aid funding for schools with military populations.

Although AUSA supported these and other provisions of the FY 2012 Defense Authorization Act, some important proposals were not authorized. Congress has not ruled out the possibility of converting the TRICARE pharmacy flat copay system to a percentage copay system, a change that could create substantial new out-of-pocket costs for many military families and retirees. Neither the phaseout of the disability offset to retired pay for medically retired servicemembers nor a proposed repeal of the deduction of VA survivor benefits from military Survivor Benefit Plan annuities was included. Although Congress authorized critical funding for such modernization initiatives as the Joint Light Tactical Vehicle, the Ground Combat Vehicle and network integration, significant work remains to be done. Progress has been made in the availability of quality housing for military families, but single Soldier housing continues to be an issue. In separate deliberation, Congress postponed the scheduled 27 percent Medicare-reimbursement rate reduction for doctors—but only through February 2012. This continues to be a serious access issue for military retirees and their families and adds to existing uncertainty in the military health care system.

Congress must support the Army's effort to balance endstrength, modernization and readiness. Each member of AUSA is a Torchbearer, carrying the message to our elected representatives and to the American public. Some of the major objectives achieved during the last legislative session are listed below. Sustaining and improving upon these accomplishments will require continued diligent effort from all of us.

Here are some of the major objectives for the last legislative session:

AUSA and others spoke out for:

- Maintaining an operational Army endstrength of 650,000
- Closing the pay gap between Soldiers and the private sector
- Limiting increases in TRICARE fees/ deductibles

Congress responded by:

- Authorizing active component endstrength of 562,000
- Maintaining the current pay gap by approving a January 2012 pay raise of 1.6 percent for military personnel
- Limiting annual increases after FY 2012 to an amount equal to the percentage increase in retired pay

People

People

- Achieving affordable, adequate housing for all servicemembers and their families
- Funding the Federal Impact Aid Program to preclude children of military families from being disadvantaged in public schools
- Ensuring that compensation is adequate to retain Department of the Army civilians deployed to an imminent-danger area

- Cutting \$1.7 billion from support and expansion of high-quality housing for single Soldiers and Soldiers with families
- Authorizing funding for Impact Aid of \$40 million for schools with 20 percent or more military dependents and \$5 million for schools that serve military students with severe disabilities
- Extending by one year the authority to allow premium pay for civilians deployed to U.S. Central Command

AUSA and others spoke out for:

- Funding reserve component endstrength at 360,000 for the Army National Guard and 215,000 for the Army Reserve
- Funding Army procurement items deemed essential for continuing operations in Afghanistan
- Ensuring adequate stocks of munitions to support training and warfighting stockpiles
- Maintaining the Army's strategic advantage and advancing modernization
- Developing the Future Force

Congress responded by:

- Authorizing Army National Guard endstrength at 358,200 and Army Reserve endstrength at 205,000
- Authorizing \$2.6 billion for Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles and \$2.5 billion for equipment and research to defeat improvised explosive devices
- Authorizing \$1.88 billion for Army ammunition programs
- Authorizing \$255 million to upgrade 49 additional Abrams tanks and \$200 million for the Rapid Innovation Program and fully funding development of the next-generation Paladin artillery system
- Authorizing \$449 million of the Army's \$884 million request for further development of the Ground Combat Vehicle; \$152 million of the Army's \$244 million request for the Joint Light Tactical Vehicle; \$1.05 billion of the Army's \$1.27 billion request for Warfighter Tactical Network integration; and appropriating \$299 million for Army Network Integration Evaluations

Readiness/Modernization

Take up the torch and join our crusade!

BECOME a member

STAY a member

RECRUIT a member



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