

Association of the United States Army



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



AUSA + 2nd Session, 113th Congress = Some Good News

For almost 14 years, the U.S. Army has continually answered the nation's call to protect America's vital interests both at home and abroad. Soldiers have deployed to nearly 150 countries while conducting a range of operations from humanitarian to major combat. The Total Army—active, Guard and Reserve—has acted as a deterrent; provided unique sustained capabilities to the joint force that only the Army can provide; and pursued conflict resolution in several regions of the world. The Army continues to face or deter complex and sophisticated threats in the form of brutal terrorist groups, aggressive or failed states, humanitarian disasters and deadly diseases. However, America's Army may not be able to answer the nation's next call because of the Budget Control Act of 2011 (also known as sequestration). Despite the complexities of these ongoing missions, sequestration threatens to degrade the capabilities of the Army at a time when forces are already stretched thin. The massive and indiscriminate budget cuts are severely damaging readiness and modernization and hampering recruiting.

In the Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 National Defense Authorization Act, Congress provided adequate personnel for the Army to meet the demands of the nation's security while engaged and committed on six continents. Further, the Bipartisan Budget Act passed in 2013 continued to provide relief from the sequestration cuts for the second straight year, restoring \$9 billion to the defense budget and allowing the Army to meet its near-term readiness shortages. In addition, critical elements of the military compensation package were protected: health care fees did not increase beyond the annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA), although Congress did allow a \$3 pharmacy copay increase for one year; the current military retirement program remains in place, awaiting the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission's recommendations to the President and Congress on 1 February 2015; \$190 million was restored to the commissary budget; and the Basic Allowance for Housing now requires a 1 percent out-of-pocket expense for servicemembers for only one year.

However, Congress did not address several other significant challenges. Servicemembers received a pay raise of only 1 percent—less than the rate of inflation—for the second straight year. That breaks repeated pledges from Congress and the administration that any changes to the military compensation package would be grandfathered for the current force and for current retirees. Most significant, Congress took no action to prevent the impending sequestration cuts scheduled to begin in 2016. Sequestration will have a devastating effect on the defense of the nation well into the next decade. It will increase pressure on the trade-off between sustaining and building near-term readiness and investing in modernization to retain our technological edge in the future. It will also force the Army to slow its aviation procurement rate, field a limited number of brigade combat teams (BCTs) and be left with a force inadequate to meet combatant commander steady-state requirements.

Congress must take further action to end sequestration and support the Army's effort to balance readiness, modernization, endstrength, training, operational activities and Soldier and family program funding. Each member of AUSA is a Torchbearer, carrying the message to our elected representatives and to the American people. Some of the major objectives sought during the last legislative session are listed below. Sustaining and improving upon these accomplishments will require continued diligent effort.

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

	AUSA and others spoke out for:	Congress responded by:	
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Maintaining an operational Army to support national defense strategy, joint force and Army mission requirements	Authorizing active component endstrength of 490,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Maintaining pay parity between Soldiers and the private sector	Approving a January 2015 pay raise of only 1 percent for military personnel	<input type="checkbox"/>

People

- Limiting increases in TRICARE fees/ deductibles/pharmacy copays
- Combating sexual assault in the military
- Achieving affordable, adequate housing for all servicemembers and their families and defending the full value of the Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH)
- Funding the Federal Impact Aid Program to preclude children of military families from being disadvantaged in public schools

- Allowing a \$3 pharmacy copay increase for one year
- Including new provisions and reforms related to combating sexual assault and maintaining prosecution of such crimes within the military chain of command
- Authorizing \$1.2 billion for support and expansion of high-quality housing for servicemembers with families but imposing a 1 percent BAH out-of-pocket cost to servicemembers for one year
- Authorizing funding for Impact Aid of \$25 million for schools with 20 percent or more military dependents and \$5 million for schools that serve military students with severe disabilities

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 current force capabilities
- Developing the Future Force

Congress responded by:

- Authorizing Army National Guard endstrength at 350,200 and Army Reserve endstrength at 202,000
- Authorizing \$197 million for Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle modification
- Authorizing \$1.16 billion for Army ammunition programs
- Authorizing \$475 million for Stryker vehicle procurement and modernization and fully funding Army aircraft procurement to include \$47.5 million for the MQ-1 Improved Gray Eagle, which is being fielded in every division
- Authorizing \$165 million for Joint Light Tactical Vehicles and \$92 million for Armored Multi-Purpose Vehicles; providing \$704 million for Warfighter Information Network-Tactical mission command networks and \$85 million for Army Network Integration Evaluations; and providing critical Science and Technology investments in support of the Army of 2025 within the new Army Operating Concept

Readiness/Modernization

Take up the torch and join our crusade!



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