



NEWSLETTER | JULY 2025



OPERATION ADVOCACY

Welcome to the July 2025 issue of the Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) Operation Advocacy newsletter. WWP's advocacy efforts connect you and your fellow warriors with your elected officials, providing you a voice in our nation's capital and empowering you to discuss the issues that matter most to the post-9/11 veteran community.



IN THIS ISSUE:

Major Richard Star Act

Pg. 3

VA Updates

Pg. 6

WALCON

Pg. 7



LETTER FROM OUR VP

Honoring the Legacy We Celebrate

The Fourth of July has come and gone, but the meaning behind our nation's independence continues to resonate, especially this year as we also marked the 250th birthday of the United States Army.

I had the distinct honor of attending the Army's 250th birthday celebration in our nation's capital and participating in the official cake-cutting ceremony, a moment that felt both solemn and inspiring. I found myself reflecting deeply on the meaning of service, sacrifice, and our shared duty as Americans. I was also reminded that the Army's legacy is not just one of battles fought, but of generations of Americans answering the call to serve.

One year older than the nation it defends, the Army has dedicated itself to fighting and winning the nation's wars for 250 years. During that time, Army families have served and sacrificed to support the Army and our country, and for that, we are all deeply grateful.

I was a U.S. Navy Hospital Corpsman who served with Marines in Afghanistan and Iraq. Standing beside fellow veterans, active-duty service members, and Army leaders at the 250th celebration, I'm reminded of the enduring legacy that unites us — a shared spirit of courage, resilience, and unwavering devotion to our country and to one another.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LETTER FROM OUR VP	1
Honoring the Legacy We Celebrate	
MAJOR RICHARD STAR ACT	3
One Fight, One Voice: Supporting Medically Retired Veterans	
LEGISLATIVE UPDATES	4
Veterans Supporting Prosthetics Opportunities and Recreational Therapy (SPORT) Act (H.R. 1971)	4
Veteran Caregiver Reeducation, Reemployment, and Retirement Act (S. 879, H.R. 2148)	5
Aviator Cancer Examination Study (ACES) Act (S. 201, H.R. 530)	5
VA UPDATES	6
Women Veterans Call Center – Now Available	6
State Tax Exemptions for Veterans and Families	6
Improved Support for Survivors	6
WALCON	7
Inaugural Conference Primes Warriors to Make Local Impact	
WWP INTERVIEW	9
Warrior Advocate Leader Spotlight: Kennery Foster	

LETTER FROM OUR VP (CONT.)

That legacy was felt again as we celebrated our Independence Day. Across the country, people gathered with family and neighbors to not only celebrate but also to reflect. From small-town parades like the one I attend, where kids chase after candy and wave the American flag, to national ceremonies that bring thousands of people together, there is a shared recognition that our freedoms — our very way of life — are secured by the dedication of those who wear our nation's uniform.

The question I always ask myself after the fireworks fade is: How do we honor the service and sacrifice so many have made?

The world we live in is complex and constantly shifting. From rising geopolitical tensions to new forms of warfare, today's Service members and veterans face realities that demand more than gratitude. Many of the men and women who served in Iraq, Afghanistan, and beyond are now navigating life at home with wounds both visible and invisible. Many are building families, starting careers, seeking care, and striving for purpose after service. Their journey doesn't end when the uniform comes off. At Wounded Warrior Project, we work every day to bridge that transition.

Our advocacy efforts have brought real progress on issues like toxic exposure, adaptive housing, and mental health care. But policy change takes not only time and persistence, it also takes people. It takes citizens, veterans, caregivers, and allies willing to step forward, share their stories, and engage with leaders at every level of government.



WWP VICE PRESIDENT, GOVERNMENT AND
COMMUNITY RELATIONS JOSE RAMOS

Some of the most meaningful support for Service members and veterans often starts far from Capitol Hill in local communities across the country. After the Fourth of July, there's a real opportunity to carry the spirit of that day into the rest of the year. Every community in America has a role to play in honoring service and keeping the promise we made to those who served — a commitment to be there for them no matter what.

The Army's 250th birthday celebration reminded us that service is ingrained in our shared American history. As we celebrate the birth of a nation and the 250th anniversary of the U.S. Army, let's honor that service by investing in our present and improving our future through service, advocacy, and connection.



JOSE RAMOS
WOUNDED WARRIOR PROJECT
VICE PRESIDENT, GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS



MAJOR RICHARD STAR ACT

One Fight, One Voice: Supporting Medically Retired Veterans

JOINED BY OTHER VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS, WWP WARRIORS SHARE THEIR PERSONAL STORIES DURING THE PRESS CONFERENCE.

In May, Wounded Warrior Project® brought together wounded veterans, lawmakers, and veterans service organizations on Capitol Hill to stand united in support of the Major Richard Star Act: Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Rep. Raul Ruiz (D-CA), leading veterans service organizations, and WWP warriors Dan Nevins (U.S. Army, FL), Jamel Daniels (U.S. Marine Corps, NY), and Joshua Wells (U.S. Marine Corps, MS). Warriors shared their stories of how this bill would benefit their lives — and the nearly 54,000 others currently denied full benefits due to outdated laws.

Leaders from the Veterans of Foreign Wars and The Military Coalition spoke, urging Congress to pass the legislation and fulfill the promise to almost 54,000 veterans unfairly impacted by current regulations. WWP was joined by Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Rep. Raul Ruiz (D-CA), leading veterans service organizations, and WWP warriors Dan Nevins (U.S. Army, FL), Jamel Daniels (U.S. Marine Corps, NY), and Joshua Wells (U.S. Marine Corps, MS).

Medically retired Service members with combat-related injuries are currently denied full benefits — they can't receive both full Department of Defense (DoD) retirement pay and full Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) disability compensation. Instead, their retirement pay is reduced by the amount of disability pay they receive, leaving some with no retirement income at all.

WWP warrior and Marine veteran Jamel Daniels echoed the need for passage of this crucial legislation for future generations of veterans. "We have a responsibility to the

new generation of veterans coming in," said Jamel.

"We need to show them that if something does happen to them in the line of duty, our country will be there to support them and treat them fairly."

The Major Richard Star Act would correct this wrong by allowing veterans to choose the financial option that works best for them. Veterans can choose to remain in the Combat-Related Special Compensation program or opt out and receive their Veterans Affairs (VA) compensation and the entirety of their military retirement pay.

Together, we can move Congress to act — and end the wounded veteran tax for good.

To learn more about the bill, WWP's advocacy efforts on it, and how to help, follow the links below:

- ★ [Major Richard Star Act press conference recap video](#)
- ★ [Understanding the Major Richard Star Act](#)
- ★ [Urge Congress to Take Action](#)



Legislative Updates

Whether it's restoring movement, supporting caregivers, or uncovering cancer risks in military aviation — WWP is working to ensure warriors and their families aren't left behind. Get the latest legislative updates.

Veterans Supporting Prosthetics Opportunities and Recreational Therapy (SPORT) Act (H.R. 1971)

Many veterans use adaptive sports as part of their physical and mental healing. Current law restricts the VA from providing recreational prosthetics unless deemed a "direct and active component" of medical treatment, not merely for comfort, convenience, or the opportunity to pursue health activities that go beyond a specific rehabilitation plan.

The Veterans SPORT Act expands VA coverage by adding sports and recreational prosthetics to VA's standard medical services, removing the need for special authorization.

While there is no Senate companion, the bill was passed by the House in May as part of the No Wrong Door Act, which would renew the popular Staff Sergeant Parker Gordon Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program. WWP will push for the No Wrong Door Act and the SPORT Act in the Senate.

More information about adaptive sports prosthetics and the legislation can be found [here](#).

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES (CONTINUED)



Veteran Caregiver Reeducation, Reemployment, and Retirement Act (H.R. 2148, S. 879)

VA's Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) provides financial stipends to post-9/11 caregivers of severely wounded veterans. However, recent changes to PCAFC eligibility have put many caregivers at risk of losing these benefits, and many are currently struggling through the uncertainty of the program. Within this population, a significant percentage of post-9/11 caregivers struggle financially, with 36% reporting incomes below 130% of the federal poverty level and many lacking basic health insurance or emergency savings.

The Veteran Caregiver Reeducation, Reemployment, and Retirement Act seeks to expand support for caregivers who are no longer part of VA's family caregiver program. The bill would provide services like job training, retirement planning, and grief counseling.

The House Committee on Veterans' Affairs considered the bill as part of its June legislative hearing, while the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs included the bill in its May legislative hearing.

To learn more about caregiver support and the bill, click [here](#).

Aviator Cancer Examination Study (ACES) Act (H.R. 530, S. 201)

Military aviators and aviation support personnel are routinely exposed to unique occupational hazards, including cosmic radiation, jet fuel exhaust, sustained G-forces, and high-altitude hypoxia.

Based on a 2023 DoD study, these exposures have been linked to increased incidences of certain cancers among air crews, compared to the general U.S. population — with an 87% higher incidence of melanoma, a 39% higher incidence of thyroid cancer, and a 16% higher incidence of prostate cancer.

The Aviator Cancer Examination Study (ACES) Act would direct VA to conduct a comprehensive study on cancer incidence and mortality among current and former military aviators and aviation ground personnel in coordination with the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine.

Thank you for your advocacy!

Thanks to your efforts, the ACES Act has successfully moved through Congress. On July 21, the House passed the Senate version passed in May, and the bill is now on its way to the President's desk for final signature. Your dedication made this possible—thank you!

VA UPDATES

★ WOMEN VETERANS CALL CENTER — NOW AVAILABLE

Women are the fastest-growing population within the veteran community, and as this population grows, so does the need for gender-specific resources and services. That's why VA created the Women Veterans Call Center to specifically support the needs of women veterans.

The call center is a dedicated team focused on helping women veterans navigate VA, providing direction, and connecting them with direct support at their local VA medical center.

VA offers this service free of charge, and you can call as often as needed. Women veterans may call for themselves, a caregiver, or family member — or a friend may call on their behalf.

The Women Veterans Call Center serves as a first-call resource to find out how VA can help. Representatives are available to assist with any questions, such as:

How do I reconnect with VA health care if I applied a long time ago, but never used my benefits?

How can I connect with local women's health contacts?

How do I refill my prescription or make an appointment?

To contact the Women Veterans Call Center, call or text 1.855.VA.WOMEN (1.855.829.6636) or use the chat feature on [its website](#).

This information comes from state VAs, which share details of the benefits available to veterans in each state.

Search the state directory on [VA's website](#) for more information.

★ IMPROVED SUPPORT FOR SURVIVORS

VA has a new plan to make it easier for survivors and dependents of deceased veterans and Service members to apply for and get the benefits they qualify for. The plan has three parts and focuses on removing roadblocks and speeding up the benefits process.

The three key improvements are:

More direct support: VA's Office of Survivor Assistance is being moved closer to VA leadership — under the Office of the VA Secretary — to help elevate survivor needs.

Personal help, every step of the way:

A new, "white-glove" survivor outreach team will be dedicated to walking eligible survivors through the Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) claims process — with personalized, one-on-one help.

Simplifying the process with technology:

VA will identify ways to use automation to make the DIC claims process easier for survivors to navigate.

More information on these changes can be found on [VA's website](#).

★ STATE TAX EXEMPTIONS FOR VETERANS AND FAMILIES

Did you know that most U.S. states and territories offer tax benefits for veterans, their families, and survivors? Whether you're a veteran looking into local options, a family member or survivor needing more information, or a Service member transitioning to civilian life, VA has created an easy-to-use guide to help — organized alphabetically by state and territory.



Inaugural Conference Primes Warriors to Make Local Impact

WWP REGIONAL GRASSROOTS DIRECTOR
COLEMAN BROOKS PRESENTS TO AN AUDIENCE
OF WARRIOR ADVOCATE LEADERS

Warrior Advocate Leaders from across the country gathered for the first-ever WALCON — a national conference focused on strengthening grassroots advocacy for veterans. Through hands-on training and powerful peer connections, these leaders left more prepared than ever to push for policy change in their communities and beyond. See how WWP is building a movement from the ground up — one voice, one vote, one warrior at a time.

WWWP's Grassroots team hosted the first annual Warrior Advocate Leader Conference (WALCON) in Overland Park, Kansas, from July 12 to 14.

Over 30 Warrior Advocate Leaders (WALs) from across the country attended the conference to receive training on all aspects of WWP's grassroots advocacy work.

WALs are WWP volunteers who engage locally with members of Congress, as well as state and local lawmakers and officials, to help push for policy that supports veterans. Additionally, WALs recruit, train, mobilize, and lead other warriors and veterans to ensure that their voices are heard by policy makers across the country." Or something similar. WALCON

focused on strengthening each WAL's ability to push advocacy efforts effectively on the local level by:

- ★ Providing advanced training on how to build strong relationships with lawmakers and their staff.
- ★ Highlighting and analyzing WWP's key legislative priorities for the year.
- ★ Helping WALs build mutual connections so they can support each other in their efforts.
- ★ Spotlighting ways WALs can develop their local networks and inspire other warriors and veterans to engage in advocacy.

WALCON (CONTINUED)



DURING THE INAUGURAL WALCON, WARRIOR ADVOCATE LEADERS TAKE PART IN A HANDS-ON TRAINING SESSION FOCUSED ON PREPARING TO MEET WITH MEMBERS OF CONGRESS.

“The goal of WALCON is to bring the Warrior Advocate Leaders together to expand their tools and knowledge. We want to build their confidence and expertise as they continue to drive meaningful change through advocacy in their districts, in their states, and in Washington, DC.”, said WWP Grassroots Regional Director, Coleman Brooks.

A key aspect of WALCON was to provide WALs with interactive activities that got them involved and ensured that their perspectives, ideas, and experiences were heard and incorporated into the program. “One of my favorite parts of WALCON was the collaborative environment and energy from everyone to make what we are doing better,” said Nicole East, a WAL from Texas. “Each one of us has our own story and motivation as to why we initially got involved in WWP’s grassroots initiative, but we all share the same common goal of advancing legislation that improves our brothers’ and sisters’ lives. I left WALCON motivated and armed with ideas on not only how to build our network here in Texas but also with better tools to accomplish it.”

With the WAL program now in its third year, WALCON participants dove deeper into all aspects of the program. A town hall forum was held to hear key concerns and offer solutions to challenges that WALs face, while numerous

workshops provided real-life situations and events for WALs to practice building their skills related to handling difficult conversations, working with members of the media, and hosting events such as policy sessions or roundtables.

“I left WALCON excited and inspired not only by the content and experience of the conference, but by seeing the passion of other Warrior Advocate Leaders to be a voice for our brothers and sisters. I am humbled to be able to represent such an incredible organization and its members.”

— **PERRY COOKE**
WWP WARRIOR ADVOCATE LEADER (KY)

“Our goal was for participants to gain a deeper understanding of policy, advocacy, and civic engagement and be more prepared to help WWP build a stronger, more connected network,” said Aleks Morosky, WWP Grassroots Regional Director. “Informed advocates can readily influence decision-makers and advance legislative solutions to issues affecting veterans and their families.”

WALs and other warriors will next come together for the Women Warriors Summit in Washington, DC, Sept. 15 – 18.

WWP INTERVIEW

Warrior Advocate Leader Spotlight: Kennery Foster

Meet Kennery Foster — Marine Corps veteran, advocate, and warrior leader. From championing suicide prevention to helping pass state legislation, Kennery's story shows how one warrior's passion can drive real change. See why he says being a WAL is one of the most meaningful roles he's ever had.

Q

Tell us a little about yourself:

I am a retired active-duty Service member and former Lafayette city police officer. I currently volunteer with WWP as a peer support group leader and Warrior Advocate Leader. I also serve as chairman of Wounded War Heroes, an organization committed to "Putting Heroes Back in the Outdoors." My military service includes 13 years in the U.S. Marine Corps and 11 years of active duty with the Louisiana Air National Guard. Outside of my advocacy work, I enjoy fishing, watching sports, attending church, and spending time with my wife and family.

Q

Why did you decide to become a WAL for WWP?

I'm passionate about helping others, and being a WAL gives me the opportunity to support a wide range of veterans — not just those who served after 9/11. The PACT Act is a powerful example of the meaningful impact we can have in advocating for the care and benefits that veterans deserve.

Q

Is there any issue that is most important to you personally? Why?

Suicide prevention is extremely important and personal to me because I've lost 29 friends to suicide and have faced my own mental health challenges. I want to ensure that veterans in crisis — whether dealing with mental health or substance use — can access immediate, 24/7 care, including through community providers, without facing long wait times. That's why the Veterans ACCESS Act, which makes it easier for veterans to receive care from VA Residential Rehabilitation and Treatment Centers, is my number one legislative priority.



WAL TRAINING, SAN ANTONIO, TX, NOVEMBER 2023

WWP INTERVIEW (CONT.)



KENNERLY FOSTER, FAR RIGHT, IS JOINED BY WWP WARRIORS AND STAFF.

Q

What's been your most interesting or powerful moment as a WAL so far?

In addition to my advocacy work on the PACT Act, I had the honor of giving a challenge coin to Speaker of the House Mike Johnson and WWP CEO Walt Piatt, during the last WWP Operation Advocacy Fly-In in Washington, DC, as well as the Governor of Louisiana during Veterans Day at the Capitol in 2025. These moments allowed me to personally share why our work is so vital to the veterans we serve.

Q

You just attended WALCON, the inaugural meeting of all WWP WALs. What was that like? What was your favorite session?

I really enjoyed connecting with the new WALs, especially since WALCON was their first experience after their initial training. Their questions brought fresh perspectives and even sparked some new ideas for me moving forward. I found the communications session particularly valuable, as well as the discussions about what's ahead. The breakout sessions were also a highlight — hearing other WALs' insights and concerns about key issues was both informative and energizing.

Q

You've recently worked on a state bill regarding the Major Richard Star Act. What was that all about?

I represented WWP and worked with other local VSOs in Louisiana to help pass a resolution in our state legislature urging the current administration to support the Major Richard Star Act. Our hope is that if we take the lead, other states will follow, demonstrating to Congress that our country is united in support of this critical legislation, which would provide well-deserved stability and financial independence to many veterans.

Q

You've recently worked on a state bill regarding the Major Richard Star Act. What was that all about?

Being a WAL is much more than a trip to Washington, DC — it's one of the most meaningful volunteer roles within WWP. Veterans from all eras count on us to be their voice when they can't advocate for themselves. You don't have to be perfect, but you do have to embody the mission, commit to the work, and stand up for your brothers and sisters to help ensure that they receive the benefits they've earned.

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