



THE AMERICAN LEGION
Veterans Strengthening America

OFFICE OF THE NATIONAL COMMANDER

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October 29, 2021

The Honorable Rep. Nancy Pelosi
The Speaker of the House of Representatives
United States Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rep. Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader of the House of Representatives
United States Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sen. Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader of the U.S. Senate
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Sen. Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader of the U.S. Senate
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Rep. McCarthy, Sen. Schumer and Sen. McConnell,

The American Legion fully understands the need to enact safety protocols during the COVID-19 pandemic. Indeed, our entire leadership team was in the U.S. Capitol as my predecessor testified before a joint session of the House and Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs on March 11, 2020. It was the same day that the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic and our nation was forever changed.

From that point on The American Legion has strongly encouraged our members to listen to the guidance provided by the Center for Disease Control, practice social distancing and wear masks when appropriate. We've encouraged our members to get vaccinated and partnered with the Department of Veterans Affairs to use many of our American Legion posts as sites for coronavirus testing and vaccine distribution.

While we do understand the need to prioritize safety, we also feel a sense of disappointment that access inside the U.S. Capitol is still very limited. I am eager to present our important legislative priorities in person before a joint session of the Veterans Affairs' Committees in March of 2022 but have cancelled the visits on the hill by members of The American Legion during our annual Washington Conference. Instead, I am encouraging members to reach out to their congressional delegations in their home offices.

Personal interactions and relationships with our elected officials are essential to The American Legion and the proper functioning of our democracy. Our remarkable legislative achievements such as the passage of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 to the more recent VA MISSION Act of 2018 are due in large part to the face-to-face contact between Legionnaires and their senators and representatives in Washington.

As wartime veterans, no one understands better than our members that accomplishing the mission may mean accepting some risk. While we understand the need for responsible measures, we also recall the words of Benjamin Franklin: "Those who would give up essential liberty to purchase little temporary safety, deserve neither liberty nor safety." It is my sincere hope that through your leadership, Congress can increase the access between the people and their elected representatives. The People's House should not be closed to groups such as ours a day longer than necessary.

No Veteran Left Behind,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul E. Dillard". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Paul E. Dillard
National Commander

CC: The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, President of the United States