



## **Coalition and Valued Associates Advocacy and Actions...**

The Coalition welcomed a new Valued Associate member this week. The National Association for Uniformed Services (NAUS) is a powerful voice for uniformed service members and their families. Their Legislative Director, Rick Jones, is also the Co-Chair for the National Military Veterans Alliance (NMVA), which represents more than 3.5 million members. Collectively, these organizations, to include ALA and AFMC, represent some 80 million Americans – those who serve or have served their country and their families.

Rick Jones will be testifying on behalf of the NMVA before the House Armed Services Military Personnel Subcommittee on Wednesday, April 9<sup>th</sup> at 2 pm. EST. NMVA's written testimony strongly supports commissary and exchange benefits, and opposes any reductions that would end the appropriation for the commissary and exchange system or mandates consolidation. The testimony will be available online after the hearing next week, which can be accessed through <http://armedservices.house.gov/index.cfm/hearings-display>.

## **Commissary Cuts, Closures, Merger Cause Growing Concern Within Military Community**

**Washington, D.C. (April 1, 2014)** – For months the Department of Defense has reiterated that they have no plans to close commissaries. For months military advocacy groups have warned that the Pentagon's proposal to slash commissary funding would do just that.

Last week, before the Senate Armed Services Personnel Subcommittee, a Defense official confirmed that some stateside commissaries might in fact have to close as higher prices and less savings force military patrons to shop elsewhere. This would also have a devastating affect on military exchanges, which rely on commissary traffic. According to the Exchange, patronage would drop 20 to 30 percent, putting in jeopardy critical Morale Welfare and Recreation (MWR) dollars.

The Pentagon is now considering a proposal to merge the commissary and Exchange, adding to the growing concern within the military community.

“Commissaries are an important part of the quality of life for those in the uniformed services and their families,” stated Rick Jones, Legislative Director for the National Association for Uniformed Services (NAUS).

“NAUS opposes the Pentagon plan to cut the Commissary subsidy,” said Jones. “It would hurt troops and their families in the pocket-book with a sharp reduction in buying power. The cut would once again have a disproportionate impact on elderly retired military members who are on fixed incomes.”

“Our junior enlisted families would be forced to make tough choices as well without the critical savings commissaries provide,” said Candace Wheeler, spokesperson for [The Coalition to Save Our Military Shopping Benefits](#). “With less purchasing power each month, military families will be forced to make tradeoffs in their household budgets – deciding between getting the car fixed, paying off credit card debt, saving for college, putting money away for retirement, or postponing a much needed family vacation.”

“NAUS is pleased to join with ‘Save Our Benefit’ and those who understand the importance of the commissary system,” added Jones.

Commissaries are part of the solution to our Nation’s budget challenges, not part of the problem – providing a great return to the Department of Defense on every dollar that is spent to provide this earned benefit.

Commissaries also support many key White House initiatives – hiring veterans and military spouses, employment for Wounded Warriors and people with disabilities, supporting diversity programs and small business, and promoting healthy lifestyles.

President Obama recognizes how important commissaries are to military life and believes closure of these stores: ***“is not how a great nation should be treating its military and military families.”***

“Save Our Benefit couldn’t agree more,” said Wheeler. “We will continue to fight for our military families and veterans’ earned benefits and welcome the support and powerful voice of the National Association for Uniformed Services.”

NAUS was founded in 1968 to protect and enhance the earned benefits of uniformed service members, retirees, veterans, and their families and survivors, while maintaining a strong defense, through nonpartisan advocacy on Capitol Hill and with other government officials. NAUS is proud to be *The Service Member's Voice in Government*.

**Save Our Benefit** is working to ensure service members, veterans, military families, people with disabilities, employees, and concerned citizens have a voice in shaping policies that impact our nation’s ability to keep a healthy and vibrant military resale system, and to protect these critical earned benefits. Individuals and organizations are encouraged to add your [voice](#) today!