

From Military-Veterans Advocacy. Please "Like" our Facebook page and follow us on Twitter at @MVadvocacy. Report from Capitol Hill September 2018.

It was both a good and bad trip.

Initially, I was able to meet with Mel Bostwick and the other attorneys from Orrick law firm on the Procopio case. They are excited and have already started to dig in. I sent them a draft brief last weekend and they are looking to flesh it out with even more research than I have the time or the resources to do. Although it is hard to predict court action I have great confidence in Mel and the rest of the firm. Their willingness to pick this case up pro bono has taken a heavy burden from my shoulders and I feel that we will have a good chance to prevail. Nice to not facing all the might of the U. S. Government alone. Great to have a powerful ally.

Most of the rest of the trip did not go so well. On a positive note, I think conservatively we have 80 votes in the Senate. Probably closer to 90 because I am being very conservative. Unfortunately, the Chairman of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee has not scheduled a mark up session to vote on HR 299. I met again with the Committee staff and have not received an answer from them that I feel is adequate.

The Senate will go into recess at the end of October. Maybe sooner. So if we do not have a mark up hearing scheduled by the second week of October I do not think we will have time to pass the bill this year. If there is any change in the bill, even the title, the bill would have to go back through the House again. So right now I think we can pass this in the "lame duck" session but if a hearing is not scheduled soon the bill will die. That means we have to start over next year.

So what I am asking you to do is to CALL WRITE AND EMAIL YOUR TWO SENATORS AND ASK THEM TO TALK TO SENATOR ISAKSON ONE ON ONE AND ASK HIM TO SCHEDULE THE MARK UP HEARING IN OCTOBER.

I talked with Sen Tester D-MT and Sen Rounds R-SD personally and both have promised to talk with Sen Isakson.

There is some unrest on the House side- in our favor. A number of Representatives will also be contacting Sen. Isakson,

Bottom line - the bill is in jeopardy but not dead yet. If it dies we will be back next year. We also hope to get a decision on Procopio by next Spring. However Procopio could go to the Supreme Court no matter who wins in the Federal Circuit.

Still waiting on the GAO report and Congress is interested in moving forward with a bill covering Guam, Am Samoa and the Northern Marianas. We probably also want to include Johnston Island in that bill as well.

Thinking about possibility of class action on Johnston Island, Would be a fairly small class but I

still need a bigger firm to asset. Class actions are complex. More on that later.

We have reviewed and support Cong Gus Bilirakis' bill, HR 6582, on burn pits. Good bill. It will be re-introduced next Congress. I must also, with great regret, announce of the passing of LCDR Celeste Santana, (MSC) USNR, a burn pit Whistleblower who died in mid July at the age of 54 from multiple myeloma which has been associated with burn pits. Res tin Peace Celeste. Eternal rest grant her O Lord and may perpetual light shine upon her.

No word from VA on promised meeting with Secretary Wilkie. Basically don't call us we will call you (maybe).

Going back to DC on Sept 23.