

ALA 2009 Government Relations Program

ALA's Role in Government Relations

One of the key programs that have been put in place to support the Association's Strategic Plan is a strong government relations presence. Simply stated our program is targeted at influencing public and government policy at all levels: federal, state and local at both the executive and legislative branch. ALA is a strong advocate for a robust and viable commissary, exchange and MWR benefit. The evolution of government relations has evolved to be captured by the term lobbying. The term "lobbyist" can be traced to the mid-seventeenth century when countrymen would gather in a large hall or lobby near the House of Commons to express their views to members of Parliament. The term lobbyist often connotes evil spirits but it is in fact a protected function under the First Amendment of the Constitution.

Government relations' (Lobbying) provides a forum for the resolution of conflicts provides analysis and opinion and allows for the balance of power among interest groups. Government relations are an important part of the legislative process as a method to provide lawmakers with reliable data and impacts of a particular bill or policy. Each year your association works with the membership and our business partners to influence public policy and craft a legislative focus agenda for the upcoming year...The legislative focus agenda for your American Logistics Association as approved by the Board of Directors is as follows:

Program Advocacy

In this time of severe budget deficits and increasing strain on resources, it is more imperative than ever that industry partners reinforce the arguments for a robust program with Congress, the Military Coalition, agency leadership, and resale management:

1. Resources provided to the system are a reciprocal commitment from citizens in recognition of their service.
2. These resources provide a big bang for the buck by retaining a quality force and the funding is small in comparison to other aspects of the compensation package.
3. Management has demonstrated responsible stewardship of resources provided as demonstrated by all standard government performance measures.
4. These programs provide a much needed employment for family members to assist in obtaining a much needed second source of household income.
5. Military resale and MWR business programs are designed to take the best aspects of the public and private sector and structure programs that are well-managed and responsive to their constituency. The military resale and MWR system is a model of how these enterprises should function by adopting the best private sector practices enhanced with solid Government performance and supported by patron contributions, industry contributions and taxpayer support.

ALA will:

- Inform Members of Congress and incoming Obama Administration officials of the contributions that exchanges, commissaries and MWR programs make to quality of life and retention of a quality force.

- Support appropriated funding levels in order to ensure continued value of these benefits including:
 1. Adequate levels of operation and maintenance funding for commissaries.
 2. Use of appropriations for mission-directed construction and renovation programs for commissaries, exchanges and MWR activities.
 3. Adequate levels of operation and maintenance funding for MWR programs.
 4. Adequate levels of overseas transportation appropriations.
 5. Adequate levels of appropriations for MWR and resale operations in deployed combat and deployed areas.
- Work with the Department of Defense, Department of Homeland Security and Department of Veterans Affairs to ensure that their resale and MWR programs remain strong and viable. Monitor issues in these agencies that affect ALA members, report on these issues and confer with policy makers to ensure that ALA member viewpoints are represented in areas of key policy development.
- Work with the Military Coalition to advance a broad range of military quality of life programs to include resale and MWR program issues.
- Educate new members of Congress, particularly those who have served in the military to gain their support for the program.
- Serve as the source of information on issues of relevance to the Military Resale System.
- Encourage active oversight of programs by Congressional committees.
- Maintain an environment conducive to effective business operations.
- Foster business conditions that continue robust Exchange dividends to MWR programs .
- Gather information and inform ALA members of trends that impact the business of resale and MWR programs such as joint basing, base realignment and closures, force structure increases.
- Ensure that offerings are responsive to patron demands.
- Ensure that legislation is enacted to support DoD resale and MWR programs also extends to resale and MWR programs of the Department of Homeland Security including the Coast Guard , and the Department of Veterans Affairs.
- Educate key officials that military service members and families fund much of their own programs but there is an appropriated fund obligation to underwrite these benefits.
- Work to continue immunities from Federal, state and local taxes for nonappropriated fund instrumentalities
- Educate key officials that providing these benefits is a bargain for the taxpayer in that patrons contribute much of the cost while the military reaps tremendous benefits in the form of recruiting and retention of quality people.
- Ensure adequate levels of MWR appropriations to reduce strain on Exchanges to provide dividends in excess of needed funding to sustain Exchange operations.
- Promote increased outreach by the Exchange and Commissary to increase patronage and enhance access to the resale benefits by members of the Guard and Reserve.
- Educate key officials on the contributions that industry partners make to operations.

- Oppose privatization of these programs.
- Support free and open access to military installations for patrons and industry support personnel.
- Ensure resale programs are unencumbered by excessive rules and regulations that inhibit efficient and effective delivery of these benefits.
- Educate key officials of the progress made in management reforms for these programs.
- Remind leaders of the resale systems of the contributions made by industry partners.
- Ensure stores operate at all locations where there is a sufficient authorized patron base to support these operations.

Specific legislative and Executive Branch policy initiatives

As the year progresses, and given the dynamic nature of the challenges facing Government, issues will evolve and legislative challenges and opportunities will arise especially as the President submits the budget and Congress deliberates. ALA will be on top of these changes and will react in the best interest of the membership and the MWR and resale program. For now, we plan on pursuing this specific legislation and program changes:

- Allow access to commissaries and exchanges for veterans that are at least 30 percent disabled. The Congress has directed a study of expanding this population shopping privileges in Exchanges and Commissaries. ALA supports this expansion.
- Extend benefits to all veterans of the Global War on Terror for a period of three years.
- Full appropriated funding of the post allowance cost of living allowances for nonappropriated fund employees and commissary employees working overseas in direct support the military mission.
- Ensure that industry representatives and authorized patrons have unimpeded and secure access to military installations to perform contractual obligations.
- Closely monitor and prevent any attempts to consolidate military service exchange and commissary programs to ensure benefits are not degraded and no consolidation is implemented without full collaboration and support of Congress, the military services, and the entire active and reserve service beneficiary population, including retirees.
- Ensure that commissaries, exchanges and MWR programs are considered in all relevant stimulus and economic revitalization programs.
- Removal of restrictions on products and services that may be offered to authorized patrons.
- Repeal of provisions of the Tax Increase Prevention and Reconciliation Act of 2005 requiring federal government entities to withhold 3 percent of payments due to vendors providing goods and services to the Federal government.
- Promote increased outreach of the Exchanges and Commissaries to increase patronage and enhance access to the resale benefits with concerted effort to reach National Guard and reservists.

- Support supply chain initiatives that drive the lowest cost of goods for the military resale system.
- Extend authority for uniform funding and management of Department of Defense nonappropriated fund instrumentalities.
- Ensure continuation of the partnership between industry and DeCA and the right levels of industry support balanced with exchange and commissary operating capabilities.
- Oppose efforts to fund more MWR programs with nonappropriated funds thereby increasing demands on exchange dividends that drive higher prices and imprudent exchange business practices.
- Ensure that commissary surcharge funding is not siphoned off to pay for legitimate appropriated fund obligations.
- Moratorium on A-76 studies of commissary operations.
- Gain authority to use appropriated funds to purchase golf cart equipment to meet Americans with Disabilities Act requirements.