In congress:

The House on Thursday, July 14, passed, 329-101, its version of the fiscal 2023 National Defense Authorization Act, which would authorize $840.2 billion in national defense spending – $37 billion more than the administration sought in military spending – after sifting through hundreds of amendments and hours of debate.

The final Pentagon topline will have to be hammered out by House and Senate leaders in a compromise defense bill. And lawmakers must also pass a spending bill that makes the increase a reality.

Other noteworthy items include:

The House narrowly approved a provision from Del. Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-D.C.) that grants the mayor of the District of Columbia the same control over its National Guard that governors of states have, whereas the city’s Guard powers are currently controlled by the president. The amendment was approved by the House after failing in the Armed Services Committee.

A vote to repeal the 2002 Iraq War authorization, a post-9/11 presidential power that authorized military force with Congress’ approval. Similar proposals have passed the House but haven’t yet seen action in the Senate, despite Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer claiming the move was a priority.

The bill also greenlights a 4.6 percent pay raise for troops. And it codifies Biden’s executive order raising the minimum wage for federal contractors across the government to $15 per hour.

The Senate has not yet voted on its own defense bill.

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
On June 13\textsuperscript{th}, \textbf{bill H.R.2543} the Federal Reserve Racial and Economic Equity Act passed in the House with 215 – 207. This \textbf{bill} requires the Federal Reserve Board to carry out its duties in a manner that supports the elimination of racial and ethnic disparities in employment, income, wealth, and access to affordable credit. The board must report on disparities in labor force trends as well as on plans and activities of the board to minimize and eliminate these disparities.

On June 14\textsuperscript{th}, the Resolution \textbf{S.Res.540} was placed on Senate Legislative Calendar under General Orders. \textbf{The resolution} expresses support for International Women's Day and recognition that women's empowerment is inextricably linked to generating economic growth and self-reliance, sustainable peace and democracy, and inclusive security. The resolution also reaffirms the Senate's commitment to end discrimination and violence against women and to pursue policies that guarantee fundamental human rights for women worldwide.

The bill \textbf{S.958} which was introduced to the Senate on March 24, 2021 was amended. This \textbf{bill} expands and otherwise modifies the allowable uses of New Access Point grant funds. These grants help health centers establish new delivery sites to provide comprehensive primary care to medically underserved populations. Specifically, health centers may use funds to construct or renovate buildings or to set up mobile medical clinics. In addition, a mobile clinic may qualify for grant funding as a new delivery site regardless of whether it is associated with a permanent, full-time site.

On June 15\textsuperscript{th}, a \textbf{Committee} was held titled “The Burnout Epidemic and What Working Women Need for A Stronger Economy”. Testimony was heard from public witnesses.

\textbf{FEW Washington Legislative Update – June 1-15, 2022}

\begin{center}
\textbf{Tier I}
\end{center}

\textbf{EEOC:}

Women make up just 26.9 percent of the federal technology workforce, according to a new study by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).

The research found that out of a total of 86,977 government employees working in technology jobs, only 23,378 were female.

EEOC conducted the study by analyzing data from fiscal year 2019, form 462 EEOC complaint data as well as select Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey data.

Overall, the agency found that across all science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) jobs in the federal government, women account for 29.3 percent of all jobs. Science occupations had the most, while math occupations had the fewest.
According to the EEOC study, most women working in STEM positions within federal government — 66 percent — are white. By comparison, 14.6 percent were African American, 9.8 percent were Asian, 6.4 percent were Hispanic or Latina, 1 percent were American Indian/Alaska Native, and 0.3 percent were Hawaiian or Pacific Islander.

“For many years the STEM workforce in the United States has been predominantly male, and overwhelmingly white and Asian. Though their numbers have been growing in recent decades, women make up only 26 percent of employed scientists, with minority women representing only 11 percent of that total,” the EEOC report said.

Researchers have previously pointed to work-life balance, gender bias, sexual harassment and the limited pool of female role models and mentors as contributing factors to the low number of women in STEM jobs.

Addressing the gender balance of technologists working in government, as well as creating a more diverse pipeline of cybersecurity talent, has been a top priority for the Biden administration.

In a speech last October, General Services Administration (GSA) chief Robin Carnahan issued a rallying cry for women working in the technology industry to consider a career in public service and to join federal government.

“The problems we face today are big, they didn’t materialize overnight and it’s going to take your creativity, your fresh set of eyes, and your technical skills to reimagine the future and then build the solutions that the American people deserve,” she said at the time.

A report by the Aspen Institute last year found that women make up just 24 percent of the wider cybersecurity workforce.

Commenting on the study findings, Carnahan said: “These numbers reflect that we have a long way to go in providing pathways for women to join the federal technology workforce and to stay and succeed once they do so. We must do better.”

“While many of our technology leaders here at GSA are women, we’re working to create the type of flexible work environment that better supports,” she added. “We’re also being more intentional about lifting and mentoring women and folks from underrepresented communities who want work in government. If we foster an environment where women in tech can thrive, we’ll do an even better job of delivering the government services that millions of women and men need – and strengthen our democracy overall.”

Executive director of the ADI industry group Ross Nodurft said: “The Alliance for Digital Innovation believes that investments in growing, developing, and diversifying the technology workforce are critical to modernizing the government’s digital services capabilities. He added: “ADI and its member companies will continue to partner with
policy makers in Congress and the administration to invest in a diverse technology workforce to meet the current and future needs of our government.”

Sourced from (FedScoop)

FEW Washington Legislative Update – July 1-15, 2022
Tier II

2023 Federal Employee Pay Raise:

President Biden and House appropriators seem thus far to be in agreement that federal employees should receive an average 4.6 percent pay raise next year, but there are still several steps officials must take before it can be implemented at the end of the year.

In March, Biden released his fiscal 2023 budget proposal, which included the pay plan. Although the document did not specify how the figure would be split between an across-the-board basic pay hike and an average increase in locality pay, traditionally 0.5 percent of an overall raise figure has been set aside for locality pay.

And last month, June, the House Appropriations Committee advanced the spending bill that serves as the vehicle for provisions related to federal worker compensation, without any mention of a pay raise, effectively endorsing the White House plan.

On Capitol Hill, there are still a few opportunities for federal employee groups and some lawmakers to try to increase the raise to the average 5.1 percent figure they have been advocating for.

The House appropriations bill is still subject to debate and amendment on the floor before lawmakers pass the legislation, although it is unclear when they will take the measure up. And Senate appropriators likely will write and advance their own version of the bill in their chamber. And while some Senate Democrats may also support a larger pay raise, Senate Republicans could use their increased leverage, due to spending bills needing 60 votes to advance, to try to reduce the size of the raise.

But even if Congress doesn’t take any further action to alter Biden’s pay raise proposal, the White House must take multiple additional steps to ensure it is implemented in January.

First, Biden must formally issue an alternative pay plan by the end of August. The step is a largely perfunctory declaration of an economic emergency preventing the federal government from instituting automatic pay increases as outlined in the Federal Employee Pay Comparability Act. For decades, presidents have used this tool to prevent sizeable automatic increases in federal employees’ locality pay from taking effect.

The formal alternative pay plan also would spell out how much of Biden’s proposed 4.6 percent pay raise would go toward an average increase in locality pay.
Then, Biden must issue an executive order before the end of the year to finalize the pay plan so that it can be implemented for the first pay period in January. That executive order confirms the increase in basic pay, and the president’s pay agent, a body consisting of the Labor secretary and the directors of the Office of Personnel Management and Office of Management and Budget, must publish a new set of basic and locality pay tables.

Sourced from (Government Executive)

FEW Washington Legislative Update – July 1-15, 2022
Tier III

UN Human Rights Council:

In line with the Biden-Harris Administration’s commitment to robust re-engagement and leadership in multilateral institutions, the United States marked its second session back on the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) by actively advancing respect for and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms during the body’s 50th regular session.

The United States supported the Council’s role of shining a spotlight on countries of concern, promoting accountability for governments and actors that abuse human rights, and addressing human rights issues across the globe.

Defending the Human Rights of LGBTQI+ Persons: The United States strongly supported the mandate renewal of the UN Independent Expert (IE) on protection against violence and discrimination based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI). As a co-sponsor of the resolution, the United States successfully worked with partners to galvanize support to renew the mandate for the next three years and to secure inclusion of new language on intersectionality; decriminalization of consensual adult, same-sex conduct; and the importance of non-discrimination. The United States welcomes the SOGI IE’s official visit to the United States in August.

Supporting the Rights of Women and Girls: Across several resolutions, joint statements, interactive dialogues, and side events, the United States strongly advocated for greater respect for the human rights and health of women and girls in all their diversity. The United States co-sponsored resolutions focused on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women and Girls and the mandate renewal of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and its consequences. The Biden-Harris Administration remains resolutely committed to advancing and protecting sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) at home and abroad—SRHR are essential to health, gender equality and equity, and sustainable development and are a central U.S. foreign policy priority.

Highlighting Human Rights Concerns in Afghanistan with an Urgent Debate: The United States, with the international community, supported an Urgent Debate and a resolution
focused on the human rights of women and girls in Afghanistan. We are alarmed by human rights abuses in Afghanistan, often attributed to the Taliban, and are disturbed by the extensive restrictions on the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by Afghan women and girls. The resolution will enable Afghan civil society to address the HRC directly during its September session.

Opposing the Open-Ended Commission of Inquiry (COI) on Israel: The United States led a joint statement on behalf of 22 countries (representing all UN regional groups) expressing deep concern about the unprecedented and open-ended COI on the situation in Israel and the West Bank and Gaza.

Condemning the Human Rights Situation in the People’s Republic of China (PRC): The United States was proud to be one of the record-breaking 47 countries to publicly condemn Beijing’s domestic human rights record via a Netherlands-led joint statement that expressed deep concern over human rights abuses in Xinjiang, Tibet, and Hong Kong.

Addressing the Deteriorating Human Rights Situation in Russia: The United States was one of 47 signatories to a strong European Union (EU)-led joint statement addressing the deteriorating human rights situation inside Russia. This statement highlighted serious concerns about the arrest of peaceful protestors, political prisoners including Alexei Navalny, the closure of civil society and media outlets, the particularly concerning situation in the Chechen Republic up to and including extrajudicial executions and enforced disappearances, and discriminatory laws, policies, and practices against LGBTI persons and members of religious minority groups.

Upholding Freedoms of Peaceful Assembly and of Association (FOAA): The United States was a member of the Core Group that drafted the resolution renewing the mandate for the Special Rapporteur on FOAA. As a co-sponsor, the United States successfully lobbied for the resolution to include language encouraging States to support diverse civil society participation in UN fora, stressing the importance of ensuring internet access extends to everyone, and calling upon States to establish and maintain a safe environment in which civil society can operate freely.

Promoting and Protecting Peaceful Protest: The United States co-sponsored the resolution on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of peaceful protests. This resolution urges States to facilitate peaceful protests by providing protesters with access to public space within sight and sound of their intended target audience and to promote a safe and enabling environment for individuals to exercise their rights to freedoms of peaceful assembly, expression, and association, both online and offline.

Exposing Violations and Abuses in Belarus: The United States co-sponsored the EU-led resolution to extend the mandate for the Special Rapporteur on Belarus so they can continue to expose the Lukashenka regime’s systemic and systematic human rights
violations and abuses, including restrictions on the media and freedom of expression and interference with the work of journalists and civil society.

Addressing Ongoing Violations and Abuses in Syria: As part of the Core Group, the United States supported a resolution addressing a range of ongoing human rights violations and abuses in Syria, particularly against women and girls and including the issues of arbitrarily detained and missing persons.

Renewing the Independent Fact-Finding Mission on Libya: The United States worked closely with Libya to renew the mandate for the Independent Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) on Libya. The FFM will release its final report in March 2023.

Calling for Cooperation on the Situation in Eritrea: The United States co-sponsored the EU-led resolution that successfully extended the mandate for the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea. The resolution calls for the government to fully cooperate with the Special Rapporteur.

Ensuring Continued Reporting on Sudan: As part of the Core Group, the United States helped draft and co-sponsored the resolution on the situation in Sudan, ensuring continued support for the Independent Expert (IE) on Sudan and ensuring the IE’s mandate remains, along with reporting requirements on the human rights situation, until the restoration of Sudan’s civilian-led government.

Co-sponsored Resolutions: The United States co-sponsored more than half of the resolutions adopted this session, including the resolutions on SOGI, FOAA, Freedom of Expression and Opinion, Peaceful Protest, Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and Girls, Violence Against Women and Girls, Internally Displaced Persons, the Independence and Impartiality of the Judiciary with a focus on women’s participation, the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, as well as the human rights situations in Belarus, Eritrea, Libya, Sudan, and Syria.

Joint Statements: Besides leading the joint statement on the COI on the situation in Israel and the West Bank and Gaza and signing onto the joint statements on the PRC and Russia, the United States also joined the joint statements on Sri Lanka and Ukraine (with a specific focus on Mariupol). The United States also supported thematic joint statements focused on SOGI, food security, special procedures, migrants, responsibility to protect, women and girls in the context of atrocities, the importance of ensuring stronger language on gender equality across HRC activity, water, and extreme poverty.

Across resolutions, joint statements, and interactive dialogues, the United States advanced language to promote equity and inclusion, including regarding women and girls in all their diversity, internally displaced persons, LGBTQI+ persons, persons with disabilities, indigenous persons, members of ethnic and religious minority groups, and members of other marginalized and vulnerable groups.
Additionally, the United States participated in multiple interactive dialogues related to the human rights situation in Ukraine. We were also pleased to participate in the interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on racism, highlighting the Administration’s commitment to racial justice.

Sourced from (US Dept. of State)

The articles and information posted in this publication are obtained from other qualified published sources and are protected under copyright laws.