

**STATEMENT OF
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OF THE
DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
MAY 21, 2009**

Madame Chairwoman and Members of the Subcommittee:

On behalf of the 1.2 million members of the Disabled American Veterans (DAV), I am honored to present this testimony to address various bills before the Subcommittee today. In accordance with our congressional charter, the DAV's mission is to "advance the interests, and work for the betterment, of all wounded, injured, and disabled American veterans." We are therefore pleased to support various measures insofar as they fall within that scope.

H.R. 1037

Congresswoman Herseth Sandlin introduced the Pilot Work Study Programs for Veterans Act of 2009 in February 2009, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to conduct a five-year pilot project to test the feasibility and advisability of expanding the scope of certain qualifying work-study activities under title 38, United States Code. The pilot program would consider the work-study positions appropriate to academia, such as tutors or research, teaching, and lab assistants and in student services facilities positions in career centers and financial aid, campus orientation, cashiers, admissions, records, and registration offices. Regulations would be formulated by the Department to carry out the pilot project, including regulations providing for the supervision of work-study positions.

The DAV has no resolution on this issue. Additionally, this legislation is outside the scope of the DAV's mission. We nonetheless have no opposition to its favorable consideration.

H.R. 1098

Congressman Perriello introduced the Veterans' Worker Retraining Act of 2009 on February 13, 2009, to amend title 38, United States Code, to increase the amount of educational assistance payable by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to certain individuals pursuing internships or on-job training.

Although the DAV has no resolution on this issue, we support this legislation as it fits with one of our principles, which is vocational rehabilitation and/or employment to help disabled veterans prepare for and obtain gainful employment. An increase in the amounts of education assistance, given the economic downturn and the pace of inflation which has diminished the

effectiveness of this program, is welcomed for those using the Montgomery GI Bill, Post-Vietnam Era Veterans Educational Assistance, Survivors and Dependents Educational Assistance or Selected Reserve Montgomery GI Bill.

H.R. 1168

Congressman Boozman introduced the Veterans' *Worker Retraining Act of 2009* on February 25, 2009, to amend chapter 42 of title 38, United States Code, to provide certain veterans with employment training assistance.

This bill directs the Secretary of Labor to pay to each participating veteran a monthly training assistance allowance for each month a veteran is enrolled in an employment and training program that teaches a skill in demand, as determined by the Secretary. The amount of the training assistance allowance is the amount equal to the monthly amount of the basic allowance for housing for a member of the Armed Forces with dependents in E-5 pay grade.

A participating veteran would be entitled to training assistance for not more than six months during each 10-year period beginning on the date in which the covered veteran first receives training allowance. In addition to the training assistance allowance, a participating veteran may receive up to \$5,000 for moving expenses related to the veteran's receipt of training.

A participating veteran would be defined as a veteran who is unemployed for not less than four consecutive months at the time of applying for training assistance under this section; able to successfully complete the employment and training program and ineligible for education or training assistance under this title.

The DAV has no resolution on this issue. We nonetheless have no opposition to its favorable consideration as an increase in the monthly training assistance allowance along with the inclusion of up to \$5,000 for moving expenses is welcomed, given the economic downturn and its impact on so many veterans who have given so much for our country.

H.R. 1172

Congressman Boozman introduced legislation in February 2009 to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to include on the website of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) a list of organizations that provide scholarships to veterans and their survivors.

Although the DAV has no resolution on this issue, we are not opposed to the favorable consideration of this legislation.

H.R. 1821

Congressman Filner introduced legislation in March 2009 to amend chapter 31 of title 38, United States Code, to increase vocational rehabilitation and employment assistance.

Specifically, it increases the eligibility period from twelve years to fifteen years. It also increases the allowance from two months to six months and allows those participating in a vocational rehabilitation program under this chapter to elect to pursue an approved program of education and receive assistance in monthly amounts to the extent that a veteran has remaining eligibility for and entitlement to assistance under this section, if the Secretary approves the educational, professional, or vocational objective chosen by such veteran for such program.

The monthly amounts a veteran may receive are the amounts equal to the monthly amounts the veteran is eligible to receive for educational assistance of this title, including the monthly stipend. Reimbursement of child care assistance for single parents is also provided for veterans who are the sole caretaker of a child up to \$2,000 per month for each month the veteran is participating.

DAV Resolution No. 246 seeks legislation to allow an extension of vocational rehabilitation in excess of the twelve-year limitation. This bill extends the current eligibility from 12 to 15 years and modifies exceptions for extensions. Therefore, the DAV supports the favorable consideration of this legislation.

H.R. 1879

Congressman Coffman introduced the *National Guard Employment Protection Act of 2009* in April 2009, to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for employment and reemployment rights for certain individuals ordered to full-time National Guard duty.

The DAV has no resolution on this issue. Additionally, this legislation is outside the scope of the DAV's mission. We nonetheless have no opposition to its favorable consideration.

H.R. 2180

Congressman Teague introduced legislation in April 2009, to amend title 38, United States Code, to waive housing loan fees for certain veterans with service-connected disabilities called to active service.

This legislation, although focused on veterans called to active duty as part of the Guard or Reserve and have to temporarily forgo receiving disability compensation, readily applies to DAV Resolution No. 015, which calls for the repeal of all funding fees for VA home loans. Our resolution notes that in 1990, Congress imposed funding fees upon VA guaranteed home loans under budget reconciliation provisions as a temporary deficit reduction measure and these fees are now a regular feature of all VA home loans, except for disabled veterans and un-remarried surviving spouses. These fees were increased, and at the present time may well continue so for the next seven years. Their express purpose is straightforward; a way to generate additional revenue to cover the costs of improvements and cost-of-living adjustments in other veterans' programs. We believe that veterans have already paid a high price for freedom and such benefits should not be borne on the back of their patriotism.

The DAV has urged Congress to refrain from further increasing the VA Home Loan funding fees and to repeal these fees as soon as possible. Congressman Teague is taking a step in the right direction and is to be commended. In these difficult economic times, such legislative action goes far in reducing the burden felt by so many, particularly those who joined the ranks of the military.

Madame Chairwoman, this concludes my testimony on behalf of DAV. We hope you will consider our recommendations. I would be happy to answer any questions members of the Subcommittee might have.