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**STATEMENT OF  
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FOR THE RECORD OF THE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY  
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
MARCH 30, 2023**

Chairman Van Orden, Ranking Member Levin and Members of the Subcommittee:

DAV (Disabled American Veterans) has a mission that includes the principle that this nation's first duty to veterans is the rehabilitation and welfare of its wartime disabled. This principle envisions vocational rehabilitation and/or education to assist these veterans to prepare for and obtain gainful employment, enhanced opportunities for employment, job placement and self-employment, so that the full array of talents and abilities of disabled veterans are used productively and to their greatest levels.

We are a resolution-based organization, which means we can support legislation if we have a resolution that is adopted by our membership body at our annual national convention. We are providing our views on the bills impacting service-disabled veterans, their families and the programs administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) that are under consideration by the Subcommittee. Based on our resolutions, this statement highlights the bills that DAV supports.

**H.R. 645, the Healthy Foundations for Homeless Veterans Act**

The Healthy Foundations for Homeless Veterans Act would make permanent the temporary flexibilities granted to VA to address veterans' homelessness by providing shelter, transportation, and communication devices to veterans in need. Specifically, H.R. 645 would grant the VA the authority to use funds to provide homeless veterans and at-risk veterans with:

- Assistance required for the safety and survival of the veteran, such as food, shelter, clothing, blankets and hygiene items;
- Transportation required to support the stability and health of the veteran, such as transportation for appointments with service providers, the handling of housing searches and the obtainment of food and supplies; and

- Communications equipment and services, such as tablets, smartphones, disposable phones, and related service plans) required to support the stability and health of the veteran (such as through the maintenance of contact with service providers, prospective landlords, and family members).

Additionally, the Healthy Foundations for Homeless Veterans Act would allow the VA to collaborate with organizations to manage the use of VA land for homeless veterans, specifically for living and sleeping.

In 2022, the VA housed over 40,000 homeless veterans surpassing its goal of 38,000. Much of this was accomplished by the authorities Congress put in place during the COVID-19 pandemic. We must continue using these authorities to ensure that our nation's veterans have the basic necessities.

It is estimated that H.R. 645, the Healthy Foundations for Homeless Veterans Act, would positively impact housing for an estimated 33,000 veterans experiencing homelessness or those who are at-risk of homelessness. DAV proudly supports this effort in accord with DAV Resolution No. 060, which calls on Congress to fund the Supportive Services for Veterans Families program to ensure prevention of homelessness among veterans and their families.

#### **H.R. 728, to Direct the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Veterans' Employment and Training to carry out a pilot program on short-term programs for veterans**

H.R. 728 would require the Veterans' Employment and Training Service within the Department of Labor to implement a pilot program under which it may use grants or contracts to carry out a short-term fellowship program. This would allow up to five states to participate in the program and be in a contract with a non-profit organization. Each fellowship program must run for 20 weeks, provide a monthly stipend, and provide veterans an opportunity to be employed on a long-term basis following the fellowship. For fiscal years 2023 through 2027, \$10 million has been appropriated to carry out the program.

These fellowship programs would help to reduce the number of unemployed veterans in this country and would greatly assist service-disabled veterans with obtaining meaningful employment. In accordance with DAV Resolution 187, DAV supports H.R. 728.

#### **H.R. 746, the Streamlining Aviation for Eligible Veterans Act**

The Streamlining Aviation for Eligible (SAFE) Veterans Act would amend the VA program, Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) (formerly known as the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program). VR&E provides comprehensive services to include vocational assessment, rehabilitation planning and employment services.

H.R. 746 would provide, “[a] rehabilitation program may include a program that includes flight training and does not lead to a degree.” Many disabled veterans want to pursue flight training via VR&E; however, they have been faced with the fact that flight training would not lead to a degree. The SAFE Veterans Act would remove that barrier. DAV supports the SAFE Veterans Act in accord with DAV Resolution No. 187.

### **H.R. 1169, the VA E-Notification Enhancement Act**

This legislation would allow VA to send certificates of eligibility and award letters to veterans for authorized educational assistance via email or other electronic means. The veteran has the option to opt out of receiving notifications via electronic means and have their notices come by mail. The veteran can revoke this election at any time.

This would be a better way of informing veterans that they are eligible for educational benefits or advising them of their monthly benefits while enrolled in school.

In accordance with DAV Resolution 095, DAV supports H.R. 1169, the VA E-Notification Enhancement Act, as it would provide veterans with timely information to help them make more informed decisions about their educational goals.

### **H.R. 1669, the VET-TEC Authorization Act of 2023**

On August 16, 2017, the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017 (commonly known as the “Forever GI Bill”) was signed into law. The law authorized the Veteran Employment through Technology Education Courses (VET TEC) Pilot Program.

The VET-TEC Pilot Program’s goal is to offer veterans an opportunity to study in high technology programs of education that are approved and paid for by VA. VET-TEC provides training in high-demand employment arenas such as computer software, computer programming, data processing, information science and media applications.

On January 5, 2021, the president signed Public Law 116-315, which amended a number of VA benefits, including the VET-TEC program; however, it remains a pilot program and is not permanent. H.R. 1669 would make this program permanent.

VET-TEC has trained thousands of veterans for jobs in the tech industry with an 84% graduation rate. DAV knows that a veteran’s transition to civilian life is not complete until they are able to secure meaningful employment that allows them to live their life with respect and dignity.

DAV strongly supports the VET-TEC Authorization Act in accord with DAV Resolution No. 183. Every veteran travels their own unique path in pursuing their new career after service, which is why the VET TEC program remains such a valuable option for many of our nation’s veterans and needs to be made permanent.

### **H.R. 1767, the Student Veteran Benefit Restoration Act**

The Student Veteran Benefit Restoration Act would determine if an action by an institution of higher learning would affect the educational benefits of a veteran if evidence has been discovered that the school committed an offense that would cause an interruption in the veteran's education program.

If an institution of higher learning closes, a course of study or program is discontinued due to no fault of the veteran, then the amount of entitlement the veteran has should not be reduced due to the circumstances of the school.

H.R. 1767 would also allow repayment of educational assistance received during a period of recognized fraud for a course if it has been determined that the course or program was suspended or terminated by that school.

In accordance with DAV Resolution 187, DAV supports H.R. 1767, the Student Veteran Benefit Restoration Act, which will help student veterans maintain their benefits if an institution of higher learning closes or discontinues a program due to no fault of the veteran.

### **H.R. 1786, the Get Rewarding Outdoor Work for our Veterans Act**

The Get Rewarding Outdoor Work (GROW) for our Veterans Act would require VA to submit to Congress a report on the Warrior Training Advancement Course (WARTAC). It is a skill-bridge education and employment opportunity for transitioning service members to complete a national-level Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) training program while still on active duty. Successful completion of the program leads to an employment opportunity at one of 55 VBA Regional Offices (ROs) around the country.

Participants learn the skill set of a rating veteran service representative (RVSR) or veteran service representative (VSR). The duration of the VSR class is 6 weeks and the duration of the RVSR class is 11 weeks. WARTAC is open to transitioning service members who have 180 days or less left in service.

DAV supports the WARTAC program. It provides veterans meaningful employment opportunities and fills the need of VBA to add employees to help address the backlog of claims. The reporting requirement will help to determine the impact and effectiveness of the program.

Additionally, the GROW for our Veterans Act would require the Secretary of the Interior, in consultation with the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Veterans' Employment and Training and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a pilot program under which veterans are employed by the Federal Government in positions that relate to the conservation and resource management activities of the Department of the Interior.

In accordance with DAV Resolution No. 185, DAV supports the GROW for our Veterans Act, as it provides the pilot program that is similar to a federal works program, that directly provides federal employment for disabled veterans.

### **H.R. 1799, the EMPLOY VETS Act**

The EMPLOY VETS Act would expand the definition of eligible veterans for VA job counseling, training and placement services for veterans by adding those service members who are eligible for the Transition Assistance Program (TAP).

The transition from military service to civilian life is very difficult for many veterans who must overcome obstacles to successful employment. By including those who are eligible for TAP in the programs within Title 38, United States Code, 4100, it fulfills the intent and purpose of Congress to provide:

- job and job training intensive services program;
- employment placement service program; and
- job training placement service program for eligible veterans and eligible persons.

For many separating from service, the immediate focus is seeking gainful employment to support themselves and their families. We agree that those eligible for TAP should have the same benefits available to them. In accord with DAV Resolution No. 187, we strongly support the EMPLOY VETS Act.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement.