



DAMA Bill Hearing

Mar 29, 2012

STATEMENT OF
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NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE SERVICE
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES
BEFORE THE
VETERANS' AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE
ON DISABILITY ASSISTANCE AND MEMORIAL AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITH RESPECT TO
**H.R. 4114, H.R. 4142, H.R. 2051, H.R. 2498, H.R. 2377, H.R. 2717, H.R. 4168,
and H.R. 4213**

WASHINGTON, D.C.

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE:

On behalf of the more than 2 million men and women of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. (VFW) and our Auxiliaries, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify on today's pending legislation.

H.R. 4114, the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2012:

Disabled veterans, their surviving spouses and children depend on their disability and dependency and indemnity compensation to bridge the gap of lost earnings and savings that the veteran's disability has caused. Each year, veterans wait anxiously to find out if they will

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receive a cost-of-living adjustment. There is no automatic trigger that increases these forms of compensation for veterans and their dependents. They rely on an act of Congress each year to ensure they receive the same cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) that is payable under title II of the Social Security Act.

The VFW supports this legislation that will bring parity to VA disability and survivor recipients' compensation by providing a COLA beginning December 1, 2012. However, the VFW continues to oppose the "rounding down" of the increase. This is nothing more than a money-saving gimmick that comes at the expense of our veterans and their survivors.

H.R. 4142, the American Heroes COLA Act:

Each year veterans play a lengthy waiting game to see if they will receive a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA). Part of that wait is to see if Social Security is provided COLA, then they wait to see if Congress will introduce a bill that will authorize veterans and their dependents the same increase. Congress has routinely provided this increase, but it is an added step that confuses and leaves veterans feeling uneasy until the COLA bill is passed. The VFW supports H.R. 4142, as it removes the unneeded step of passing a bill to increase COLA. As stated previously, the VFW opposes the rounding down of COLA.

H.R. 2051, the Veterans Missing in America Act of 2011:

The Missing in America Project (MIAP) has worked tirelessly around the country to find the remains of unclaimed veterans. VA has had an ad hoc relationship with MIAP to provide burial options for veterans. This bill would formalize the relationship, ensuring veterans who have no living or financially capable family member are provided the level of remembrance and respect they have earned. The VFW supports this bill.

H.R. 2498, the Veterans Day Moment of Silence Act:

On November 11, 1918, the Armistice was signed ending the War to End All Wars. Twenty years later Armistice Day was recognized as a National holiday dedicated to world peace, but in 1954, after two more wars, Armistice Day was changed to Veterans Day to honor the service and sacrifice of all veterans. In 1968, in an effort to commercialize Veterans Day, a bill was signed to make the observance of Veterans Day on a Monday, giving government employees a long weekend. That law has since been reversed, but Veterans Day continues to be commercialized and to those outside the veterans' community, the holiday has lost its meaning. H.R. 2498 will help restore the meaning, and act as a bridge for the 99 percent who sleep safely at night because of the service and sacrifice of our military veterans. The VFW proudly supports this bill and its quick passage.

H.R. 2377, the RAPID Claims Act:

The Veterans' Benefit Improvement Act of 2008, now Public Law 110-389, authorized a one-year pilot program on processing fully developed claims within 90 days. Due to the pilot's success, on June 15, 2010, the VA directed all Regional Offices to begin using VA Form 21-526EZ, the fully developed claim application for disability. This directive fulfills the spirit of H.R. 2377, and the VFW believes that review of the new directive would better serve veterans and VA than statutorily mandating a change. A thorough review could expose flaws or weaknesses that could be more easily corrected through directives than through future regulatory changes.

H.R. 2717, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to designate one city in the United States each year as an "American World War II City:

Cities around our nation, big and small, have tremendous histories of supporting "the War Effort," and in an effort to preserve that history, it is suiting to designate an "American World War II City" each year. Therefore, the VFW supports the provision in H.R. 2717 to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to annually bestow this title on a deserving city. The process of deciding should be done through a competitive process; therefore, the VFW cannot support the provision that will designate any city with the title outside of this competitive process.

H.R. 4168, the Caring for Our Fallen Act:

In 1991, the Department of Defense pulled out the last airmen from Clark Air Force Base, leaving Clark Cemetery abandoned. In 1994, VFW Post 2485 assumed financial responsibility for keeping the cemetery in a "state of arrested decay." To date, no government assistance, financial or otherwise, is provided for the upkeep of this cemetery. Next to the cemetery is a volcano, which erupted in 1991, leaving one foot of the headstones buried in ash. This is an unacceptable condition for our war dead, and it is time for our government to take responsibility for this cemetery. The VFW supports H.R. 4168, giving the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) authority to care for Clark Cemetery. The ABMC is the best suited to assume this authority with their experience in care for cemeteries and monuments in foreign lands, however, it is important that ABMC is provided the financial resources necessary to ensure that needed improvements and ongoing maintenance can be performed without affecting their mission anywhere else on the globe.

H.R. 4213, an amendment to title 38, United States Code, to require judges of the United States Courts of Appeals for Veterans Claims to reside within fifty miles of the District of Columbia:

The VFW does not have a position on this bill.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement and I am happy to answer any questions the

subcommittee may have.

Information Required by Rule XI2(g)(4) of the House of Representatives

Pursuant to Rule XI2(g)(4) of the House of Representatives, VFW has not received any federal grants in Fiscal Year 2012, nor has it received any federal grants in the two previous Fiscal Years.