



EANGUS The Enlisted Association of the
National Guard of the United States



Veteran Status for Title 32 Guardsmen HR1025/S491

Background:

It may come as surprise to most that a Guardsman, who serves twenty years in uniform, is not automatically considered a veteran. Currently, if members of the National Guard and Reserve have not served a qualifying period of active duty service, they are not considered to be veterans under Federal law. Just one of the requirements, barring many Title 32 Guardsmen from being recognized as veterans, is that they did not serve at least 180 continuous days on federal status.

Congressman Tim Walz and Senator Mark Pryor have introduced their respective bills to grant veteran status to Title 32 Guardsmen, H.R. 1025 and S. 491, the Honor America's Guard-Reserve Retirees Act of 2011. Congressman Tim Walz's legislation passed the House of Representatives on October 11, 2011 and has been referred to the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs. Senator Mark Pryor's identical bill, S. 491, has also been referred to the same committee which held a hearing on the legislation last June.

At the end of the 111th Congress, the House of Representatives unanimously passed H.R. 3787. Sponsored by Congressman Walz, H.R. 3787 would have amended Title 38, United States Code, to recognize the service in the reserve components of certain persons by honoring them with status as veterans under law. The new bills, S.491 and H.R. 1025, seeks to accomplish the goals of previous bill and would extend honorary veteran status to National Guard and Reserve members who qualify for retirement after 20 years, but were never activated long enough to meet current statutory requirements in order to attain veteran status.

During consideration of H.R. 3787, the House Veterans Affairs Committee declared that, "...steadfast service of 20 years in the National Guard and Reserve, even absent qualifying Federal service, deserves recognition of the service and sacrifice of these men and women. This legislation is intended to recognize that, like their counterparts in the active duty component, Guard and Reserve members volunteered to serve their country and were available for activation at any time. The Committee believes that providing honorary recognition to these individuals is appropriate." Additionally and most importantly, the Congressional Budget Office ruled that the bill would have no budgetary impact.

Recommendation:

EANGUS resolution 10-05 strongly supports passage of veteran status legislation, we applaud Senator Pryor's and Congressman Walz's dedication to recognizing Title 32 soldiers and airmen as veterans after twenty years of service, and ask members of the House and Senate to cosponsor and vote for H.R. 1025 or S. 491. Please feel free to call or email EANGUS Legislative Director Randy Jennings, should you have any questions. (703) 519-3846 randy.jennings@eangus.org



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Concurrent Receipt of Retirement Pay & Disability Compensation

Background:

Congress needs to fully eliminate the law that makes most disabled uniformed service retirees forfeit part or all of their military retired pay in order to receive their VA disability compensation. Presently some disabled veterans are forced to give up all or part of their hard earned retire pay to offset their VA disability compensation. It is only just and fair that any veteran who earns their retirement pension and is disabled while serving their country can concurrently receive their full pension plus the entire disability compensation from the VA.

The first successful effort, to win limited concurrent receipt, took place in 2003. Congress passed legislation that ended the disability offset for some categories of veteran, which was based upon years of service, level of disability, and combat vs. non-combat service connected injuries. Thus approximately 304,000 disabled retirees, or 33% of the total disabled retired population, have won their benefits concurrently. This leaves out more than 623,000 veterans who are still being forced to give up an amount of their retiree pay equal to their disability compensation.

There are four pieces of legislation that seek to close all or part of this gap. Congressman Joe Wilson has introduced **H.R. 186** which would expand the eligibility for concurrent receipt of military retired pay and veterans' disability compensation to include all members of the uniformed services who are retired under chapter 61. Congressman Gus Bilirakis has reintroduce **H.R. 303** that expands concurrent receipt for all length of service retirees regardless of disability rating and Congressman Sanford Bishop has introduced **H.R. 333**, the Disabled Veterans Tax Termination Act, which combines the elements of both bills and corrects a CRSC computation glitch. **S. 344**, sponsored by Sen. Harry Reed, makes eligible for the full concurrent receipt for individuals who were separated from military service due to a service-connected disability.

Recommendation:

The Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States supports these legislative efforts to eliminate the disability offset and requests members of the both House and Senate to either cosponsor or vote in favor of any or all of these four bills. Please feel free to call or email the Legislative Director Randy Jennings, should you have any questions. (703) 519-3846 randy.jennings@eangus.org



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The National Guard, “A Great Value for America”

Background:

As our nation continues to struggle with ever tighter budgets and our military must stretch each and every dollar to counter all national security threats, the National Guard offers a proven cost effective solution. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan has proven the Guard can accomplish the vast majority of the mission sets our military needs, while at the same time retaining the ability to mobilize over 50,000 guardsmen for disasters at home, such as Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Now is not the time to cut the budget and end strength of the Guard, now is the time to not only retain the present capability of the Guard but also to transfer additional missions to the Guard and even increase the Guard as significant cost savings measure.

As one simple measurement of the Guard being the most cost effective component of United States armed forces, the Guard makes up nearly half of the Army’s combat power and more than a third of that of the Air Force, for about 7 percent of the total defense budget. Money spent on the Guard goes further in fulfilling defense needs of America as compared to allocated those resources elsewhere.

Keep in mind the fact that when a guardsman is not on orders, they are providing for their own housing, food and taking an active part in building America’s economy. Members of the National Guard serve at home and around the world for approximately one-third of the life cycle cost as compared to an active duty soldier or airman. For the cost of a single active duty service member, we can train, retain and have ready to deploy three to four guardsmen.

Today’s National Guard provides a proven cost effective and fiscally prudent way to wisely spend our limited tax dollars and provide for the common defense both abroad and here at home. After more than ten years since 9-11, the Guard has truly been part of the Total Force as an operational reserve more than able to carry out a multitude of missions at a lower overall cost. We simply cannot waste the billions of dollars that has been invested in training, equipping, and maintaining the Guard, by slashing its budget in order to protect more costly active duty forces.

Recommendation:

The Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States supports the same level of overall funding and end strength for the National Guard, and calls for additional mission sets being allocated to the Guard as a proven way to save scarce funds spent on national security. Please feel free to call or email the Legislative Director Randy Jennings, should you have any questions. (703) 519-3846 randy.jennings@eangus.org