

**STATEMENT OF
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OF THE
DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON BENEFITS
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
DECEMBER 12, 2001**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

I am pleased to submit the views of the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) regarding H.R. 3423, which would reform burial rules at Arlington National Cemetery.

Recent tragic events have illustrated the need to allow military reservists who meet all eligibility criteria, except the age requirement, to receive burial at America's most cherished cemetery.

Because he was not age sixty or more, American hero Captain John Burlingame was nearly prevented from receiving the well-deserved honor. Captain Burlingame was the pilot of the hijacked plane that crashed into the Pentagon on September 11, and a retired Navy Reserve fighter pilot. Clearly, the well-intended purpose of the burial requirement does not outweigh the need to honor such distinguished citizens.

The DAV supports H.R. 3423 because it would ensure that career reservists are eligible for the honor of burial at Arlington, a benefit warranted by their service to our country, regardless of their age. The bill also ensures that reserve members who die while performing duty are eligible for burial at Arlington.

Military reservists are essential to the security of democracy. Reserve forces have had increased responsibilities during recent campaigns and their mission is vital to national defense. Their service and sacrifices must be honored, especially those whose lives were lost in defense of our freedom. Title 38, United States Code, entitles reservists, injured in the line of duty, to receive benefits administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Therefore, it is inconceivable that such veterans would not also be entitled to burial at Arlington.

DAV urges Congress to pass H.R. 3423 to end the inequity toward military reservists, and bestow the honor and respect warranted by their noble service to our country.

On behalf of the more than one million members of the DAV, we thank you for the opportunity to present our views, and we thank the Subcommittee for its continuing support of our nation's veterans.