

TESTIMONY OF
CRAIG W. DUEHRING
PRINCIPAL DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
RESERVE AFFAIRS

BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON BENEFITS
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

THE SERVICEMEMBERS AND MILITARY FAMILIES FINANCIAL PROTECTION
ACT OF 2001
H.R. 3173

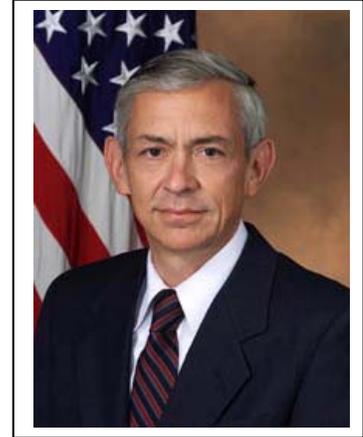
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Craig W. Duehring

Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs

Mr. Duehring is the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, designated to perform the duties of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs until the Senate confirms a new Assistant Secretary. He was selected effective July 23, 2001.



As the Principal Deputy, Mr. Duehring will serve as the senior deputy to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs in policy development and overall supervision of the Reserve forces of the armed forces of the United States. He will be the chief staff advisor to the assistant secretary for all functional areas and responsibilities assigned to the office.

Previously, Duehring served on the Bush-Cheney Transition Team and the Department of Defense Transition Team. He was the executive director of the Patrick Henry Center for Individual Liberty, a non-profit 501 (c)(3) educational and charitable foundation located in Fairfax, Virginia. Duehring was the endorsed Republican candidate for the Minnesota 2nd Congressional District in 1998. He is a 28-year military veteran, retiring as a colonel in the U.S. Air Force in February 1996. His final military assignment was as the U.S. Air Attaché to the Republic of Indonesia.

He is a decorated combat pilot, completing over 800 missions during the Vietnam War. Duehring has flown more than a dozen types of aircraft, amassing over 1,200 hours in the A-10 Thunderbolt II. His military awards and decorations include the Silver Star, the Defense Superior Service Medal, two Distinguished Flying Crosses, three Meritorious Service Medals, 27 Air Medals, two Air Force Commendation Medals, the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry (individual award), and the Vietnamese Staff Service Honor Medal (1st Class). Duehring is also a recipient of the Air Force's highest individual award for leadership in the senior officer category, the Lance P. Sijan Award.

Duehring holds a bachelor of science in History and Sociology from Minnesota State University at Mankato, and a master of science in Counseling and Guidance from Troy State University.

He is a native of Mankato, Minnesota.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to come before you this morning to discuss H.R. 3173, the Servicemembers and Military Families Protection Act of 2001.

The Department of Defense supports section 2 of H.R. 3173, which would amend the Soldiers' and Sailors' Civil Relief Act to prohibit, absent a court order, eviction or distress of a servicemember's spouse, children, and other dependents during the member's military service if rent for the premises does not exceed \$1,950 per month. This is an increase from the current maximum rent of \$1,200, which has been in effect since 1991. This increase is needed to reflect that some servicemembers, especially those with families living in high cost areas, pay rents in excess of the current maximum.

The Department of Defense does not support section 3 of H.R. 3173, which would permit a servicemember to elect within 30 days after becoming eligible for Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI) additional coverage in increments of \$250,000 up to \$1 million. An insured servicemember would be able to elect this additional coverage after this 30-day period if proof of good health is provided. We concur with the Department of Veteran Affairs' concerns that the bill would be inconsistent with sound actuarial principles and may jeopardize the financial stability of the SGLI program.

The Department of Defense is also concerned that increasing the coverage to the levels proposed by the bill would have a negative impact on the cost of the SGLI program, which now offers very affordable insurance at a flat rate for everyone, regardless of medical condition. If the higher coverage is approved, we are concerned that the basic rate would increase. In order to maintain the financial integrity of the program and keep premiums at an affordable level, premiums for optional coverage would have to be based on age and physical examinations would have to be required in order to provide proof of good health for those who elect additional SGLI coverage after the close of the thirty-day period. We are also concerned about a possible impact on child coverage, which is currently offered at no cost, and on spouse coverage. Finally, the Department is concerned that the higher levels of coverage, which many servicemembers will not elect, will increase the burden on commanders to document that servicemembers were aware of the higher levels of coverage and opted not to purchase them. Such documentation is necessary because survivors are often reluctant to believe that a deceased servicemember knowingly chose to be covered by less than the maximum amount of SGLI.

We appreciate this opportunity to discuss these matters with you.