

STATEMENT OF

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COMMANDER

MARINE FORCES RESERVE

BEFORE THE

HOUSE VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

ON

EDUCATION FOR THE TOTAL FORCE

9 MARCH 2006

Chairman Buyer, Congressman Evans, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, it is my honor to speak with you today about the recently proposed legislative changes to Title 10, specifically Chapters 1606 and 1607. Respectfully, I would also like to take this opportunity to discuss possible issues relative to both chapters of Title 10 that would enhance support for the Continuum of Service concept.

This year marks the fifth year that our reserve component has augmented and reinforced our active component in support of the Global War on Terror. Thanks to strong Congressional support, the Marine Corps currently continues to recruit and retain the best young men and women that our Nation has to offer. The majority of young men and women who join our Reserve component are seeking intellectual and physical challenges that will lead to self-improvement. Reserve education benefits provide a strong incentive for individuals seeking higher education who may otherwise not be able to afford the opportunity. After committing to our Corps and completing initial training requirements our Marines continue to challenge themselves and to seek self-improvement. The Reserve education benefits offered under Title 10 provide the financial foundation from which Marines seek the intellectual challenges for self-improvement and the benefits in turn serve as substantial retention tools. The education benefits that Congress provides ultimately serve to train our Marines in fields and skills that enhance their ability to support the Corps' warfighting efforts and serve their local communities.

The value of the Reserve component Title 10 MGIB benefit (Chapter 1606) relative to the active duty Title 38 MGIB benefit (Chapter 30) has decreased since its initial implementation. The Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans

Affairs have formed a task force to review the “Total Force” proposals. It would be a bit premature for us to take a position pending the recommendations of that task force.

The recent enactment and implementation of Chapter 1607 education benefits has significantly enhanced the ability of our Marines to continue their pursuit of higher education after return from activation in support of the Global War on Terror. The current manner by which Chapter 1607 education benefits are earned is based upon the time a Reserve member is activated. The benefit, as currently structured, is equitable and serves as an excellent tool to retain battle trained and experienced Marines. This proposal will reduce the period of education benefits paid to many Marines post-activation from 36 months of guaranteed assistance to one year or less. Changing the current qualification standards of Chapter 1607 would also decrease the monetary benefit received by many Marines and in many cases, eliminate Chapter 1607’s usefulness as a retention tool. Examples of the potential loss of Chapter 1607 benefits are listed in the enclosed table.

1607 vs. Tier III Benefit Comparison

Qualifying Criteria	1607(current)	Tier III (proposed)	Loss of benefits	Loss in retention
90 days	\$413.60 x 36 mos = \$14889	\$1,034 x 3 mos = \$3,102	\$11,787	33 mos
1 yr	\$620.40 x 36 mos = \$22,334	\$1,034 x 1 yr = \$12,408	\$9,926	2 yrs
2 yrs	\$827.20 x 36 mos = \$29,779	\$1,034 x 2 yrs = \$24,816	\$4,963	1 yr

The Marine Corps Reserve continues to recruit and retain quality men and women willing to serve in our military and help our nation fight the Global War on Terror. These men and women do so while maintaining their commitments to their families, their

communities and their civilian careers. These varied commitments, coupled with the frequently changing circumstances associated with their responsibilities, often necessitates a temporary drop from the Selected Reserve to the Inactive Ready Reserve. As currently written, a military member who drops from the Selected Reserve to the Inactive Ready Reserve suffers a permanent loss of their Chapter 1607 benefits

The long-term success and sustainability of our Reserve Force is directly related to our ability to recruit and retain men and women of high quality and character. With the continued assistance and support from Congress in the area of education benefits we will continue to recruit and retain a quality Reserve Force that will both serve our nation in the Global War on Terror as well as benefit our local communities.