



News From The ...

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

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Subcommittees Report Legislation to Full Committee

WASHINGTON, D.C.—This week, the four Subcommittees of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs held markups on pending legislation. In total, 13 bills were favorably forwarded to the Full Committee.

The Improving Transparency of Education Opportunities for Veterans Act of 2012 (H.R. 4057), introduced by Committee Vice-Chair Rep. Gus Bilirakis and a member of the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, would create a centralized complaint process to track student issues concerning the GI Bill, as well as require VA to better inform veteran students about education counseling and provide expanded data points for students to help make informed choices about their education.

The Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations moved forward with three bills, including the Veterans Fiduciary Reform Act of 2012 (H.R. 5948). The bill was introduced by Subcommittee Chairman Rep. Bill Johnson, and would fix what has been recently revealed as a flawed VA Fiduciary Program. "There's no question that our current fiduciary program put a lot of veterans at financial risk. This legislation is an important step toward fixing a broken system and protecting America's veterans who have so bravely served us," said Johnson.

The Subcommittee on Health marked up two pieces of legislation, including the Open Burn Pit Registry Act of 2011 (H.R. 3337), introduced by Rep. Todd Akin. The Open Burn Pit Registry would require the Department of Veterans Affairs to establish a registry of members of the military who were exposed to toxic chemicals and fumes caused by open burn pits in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"We owe many things to the men and women who fought so valiantly in service to our country, not the least of which is to take a serious and proactive approach to the issues they experience when they return home. Establishing an open burn pit registry will provide us with an effective way to document and monitor the health status of servicemembers from their time of deployment, gather and track data on any adverse health effects among those exposed to burn pits during service, and better inform future studies regarding the long-term health effects of burn pit exposure," stated Rep. Ann Marie Buerkle, Chairwoman of the Subcommittee on Health.

The Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs marked up three bills introduced by Chairman Jon Runyan. The Veterans Disability Examination Access Improvement Act (H.R. 5880), takes aim at speeding up the disability claims process by extending VA's authority to enter into contracts with private physicians to conduct medical disability examinations.

The Full Committee is expected to consider the legislation on July 11, 2012.

List of Bills

H.R. 3337, as amended: The Open Burn Pit Registry Act, introduced by Rep. Todd Akin of Missouri.

H.R. 3524, as amended: “Disabled Veterans Employment Protection Act,” introduced by Rep. Bruce Braley of Iowa.

H.R. 3730, as amended: The Veterans Data Breach Timely Notification Act—To amend Title 38, United States Code, to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide notice to individuals whose sensitive personal information is involved in a data breach, and for other purposes, introduced Rep. Joe Donnelly of Indiana.

H.R. 4057, as amended: Improving Transparency of Education Opportunities for Veterans Act of 2012, introduced by Rep. Gus Bilirakis of Florida.

H.R. 4079, as amended: The Safe Housing for Homeless Veterans Act,” introduced by Rep. David McKinley of West Virginia.

H.R. 4115: HIRE at Home Act, introduced by Rep. Steve Stivers of Ohio.

H.R. 4481, as amended: Veterans Affairs Employee Accountability Act—To amend Title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to ensure that Department of Veterans Affairs employees who violate certain civil laws do not receive bonuses, introduced by Rep. Phil Roe of Tennessee.

H.R. 4740, as amended: Fairness for Military Homeowners Act of 2012, introduced by Rep. Duncan Hunter of California.

H.R. 5735, as amended: To provide for the establishment of a Place of Remembrance at Arlington National Cemetery for interment of cremated fragments of the remains of members of the Armed Forces killed in Afghanistan, Iraq, or a subsequent conflict when the fragments are unidentifiable by use of DNA testing or other means because of the condition of the fragments, are unclaimed, or are identified and authorized by the person designated to direct disposition of the remains for interment in such memorial, introduced by Rep. Steve Stivers of Ohio.

H.R. 5747, as amended: Military Homes Protection Act, introduced by Rep. Elijah Cummings of Maryland.

H.R. 5880: Veterans Disability Examination Access Improvement Act, introduced by Rep. Jon Runyan of New Jersey.

H.R. 5881, as amended: Access to Veterans Benefits Improvement Act, introduced by Rep. Jon Runyan of New Jersey.

H.R. 5948, as amended: Veterans Fiduciary Reform Act of 2012—To amend Title 38, United States Code, to improve the supervision of fiduciaries of veterans under the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes, introduced by Rep. Bill Johnson of Ohio.

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