



NGAUS Alert #12-15

November 16, 2012

The Issue: Authorizing Veteran Status for National Guard and Reserve Members Entitled to Reserve Retirement Pay

Immediate Action Required: Contact your senators and ask them to support the inclusion of S. 491 in any end-of-year veterans omnibus bill that may emerge. S. 491 would authorize National Guard and Reserve members entitled to reserve retirement pay the honor of claiming veteran status

On March 4, 2011, Sen. Mark Pryor introduced S.491, Honor America's Guard-Reserve Retirees Act of 2011, to amend Title 38 to recognize 20 years of service by members of the reserve components by honoring them with status as veteran under law. S.491 is cost-neutral and provides an opportunity for a divided Congress to come together in support of our reserve component members.

The Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs (SCVA) held a hearing June 8, 2011, but movement on the bill has stalled. H.R. 1025, the companion bill to S. 491, passed the House on Oct. 12, 2011, and was referred to the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs alongside S. 491.

There is the possibility that the SCVA may send a package of veterans issues forward for a floor vote in an omnibus bill before the end of the year. The language of S. 491 needs to be included on any such bill that moves forward to the House where it would certainly be approved since the House has already passed H.R. 1025.

Many members of Congress may not know that a reserve component member can complete a full Guard or Reserve career, but not earn the title of Veteran of the Armed Forces of the United States unless the member has served on Title 10 active duty for other than training purposes. According to the Congressional Research Service, this affects 288,757 retired members of the National Guard and Reserve who were never activated or allowed to deploy on title 10 missions other than for training purposes through no fault of their own.

Today, National Guard members performing Operation Noble Eagle duty or protecting our southwestern border in a Title 32 status may one day retire from the Guard, but not qualify to be classified as a veteran.

Title 38 (Veteran's Benefits) excludes career reservists from the definition of veteran who have not served on Title 10 for other than training purposes. Drill training, annual training, active duty for training and Title 32 duty are currently not qualifying service to earn veteran status.

This cost-neutral bill would not bestow any benefits other than the honor of claiming veteran status for reserve component members who completed a 20-year career, but were never ordered to Title 10 active service other than for training. purposes.

TAKE THE FOLLOWING ACTION:

By using the Write to Congress feature provided below, you can email your senator. A sample letter is included. You can email the prepared message or edit the sample letter as you desire. This is the quickest and most effective method of expressing your views to Congress. Also, contact your friends and family and urge them to write to Congress as well. For more in-depth information and background, visit our website at <http://www.ngaus.org/>. Please direct any questions concerning this issue to Pete Duffy, the NGAUS acting legislative director, at 202-454-5307 or pete.duffy@ngaus.org.