



4 February 2014

The Honorable Bernie Sanders (VT)
Chairman, Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee
412 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr (NC)
Ranking Member, Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee
412 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

CC: Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (NV) and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (KY)

Dear Chairman Sanders and Ranking Member Burr,

On behalf of the Association of the United States Navy (AUSN), we support and would like to request immediate Senate floor consideration of S. 1982, as amended, the Comprehensive Veterans Health and Benefits and Military Retirement Pay Restoration Act of 2014. AUSN has been tracking and supporting many provisions of this omnibus Veterans bill, which are vital to our nation's Veterans.

S. 1982 contains provisions of the previous Veterans omnibus bill S. 944, originally the Veterans Educational Transition Assistance Act. The provisions would, amongst other things, firstly, amend Title 38, United States Code to require courses of education provided by public institutions of higher education that are approved for purposes of the All-Volunteer Force Educational Assistance Program. Secondly, S. 1982 amends Post-9/11 Educational Assistance to charge Veterans tuition and fees at the in-State tuition rate (*a provision which recently passed the House in the form of H.R. 357, by a vote of 390-0*). The bill, furthermore, contains provisions of S. 495, the Careers for Veterans Act, which would require Federal agencies to hire Veterans and States to recognize the military experience of Veterans when issuing licenses and credentials. Another important provision, is derived from S. 629, the Honor America's Guard-Reserve Retirees Act, which would amend United States Code to recognize service in the Reserve Components of the armed forces of certain persons by honoring them with status as Veterans under law. This is a very important issue to members of AUSN's Reserve Component, and we hope that this provision will be considered soon so that men and women who have served a twenty plus year career in our Reserves may be recognized as Veterans under law.

Finally, AUSN supports a number of additional provisions per S. 1982, addressing a wide range of Veterans issues. For instance, the bill contains provisions of S. 6, the Putting Our Veterans Back to Work Act of 2013, which reauthorizes the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011. The S.6 provision calls for providing assistance to small business owned by Veterans and improving the enforcement of employment and reemployment rights for members of the uniformed services. We also praise the inclusion of provisions from S. 1216, the Job Opportunities for Veterans Act of 2013, which would approve and increase the availability of on the job training and apprenticeship programs carried out by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. S. 1982 also draws provisions from S.1580 such as the Ensuring Safe Shelter for Homeless Veterans Act of 2013, which ensures shelters that receive per diem funding are operating within existing safety codes and regulations.

Thank you for your consideration. AUSN hopes for swift passage by the Senate of this important omnibus bill to send to the House. With little Veterans legislation passed into law during the 1st Session of the 113th Congress, passage of S. 1982 would be an important way to start the 2nd Session. If you have any questions please feel free to contact our Legislative Director, Mr. Anthony A. Wallis, at anthony.wallis@ausn.org or at 703-548-5800.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John B. Totushek", written over a light blue horizontal line.

VADM John B. Totushek, U.S. Navy (Ret.)
Executive Director, AUSN