



Legislation Text

File #: Res 1066-2003, **Version:** *

Res. No. 1066

Resolution urging Congress to hold hearings regarding Senate Bill 1186 and House of Representatives Bill 1264, which provide for a reduction in the backlog of claims for benefits pending with the Department of Veterans Affairs, and calling upon Congress to adopt these bills as expeditiously as possible.

By Council Members Nelson, Sanders, Gerson, Addabbo, Avella, Clarke, Comrie, Fidler, Gennaro, Gentile, Jackson, Jennings, Quinn, Sears, Vann, Weprin, Liu, Katz and Gonzalez

Whereas, According to the Department of Veterans Affairs ("VA"), there are over 25,000,000 honorably discharged veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States; and

Whereas, The United States has always been able to count on the courageous men and women who serve in its armed forces to make sacrifices on behalf their country; and

Whereas, According to United States Representative Joe Bacca, there are currently over 500,000 veterans who have claims pending with the VA for veterans' benefits, some of which belong to veterans of the Korean War and WWII, and approximately 100,000 of such claims are over a year old and have yet to be investigated or "developed"; and

Whereas, Congressional findings indicate that the Nation's veterans are dying at a rate of more than 1,000 veterans a day; and

Whereas, The death of a veteran marks the end of the statute of limitations within which a veteran or his or her dependents may receive benefits, and if a veteran's claim has not been resolved by his or her death, the veteran's dependents do not receive any benefits; and

Whereas, In October 2002, in response to the backlog of claims within the VA, Representative Joe Baca introduced House of Representatives Bill 5533 ("H.R. 5533"), entitled "Department of Veterans Affairs Claims Backlog Reduction Act of 2002", which would provide for a 3-year pilot program to reduce the backlog of claims for benefits pending with the VA; and

Whereas, House of Representatives Bill 5533 was referred to the Subcommittee on Benefits but was never passed; and

Whereas, In March 2003, Representative Baca introduced House of Representatives Bill 1264, which is similar to H.R. 5533; and

Whereas, This year's version of Representative Baca's bill is entitled the "Department of Veterans Affairs Claims Backlog Reduction Act of 2003" and currently has 63 supporters; and

Whereas, In June of 2003, Senator John Edwards introduced Senate Bill 1186, which is similar to House of Representatives Bill 1264 and also seeks to redress the current backlog of claims with the VA; and

Whereas, In addition to proposing a 3-year pilot program that would seek to identify the current backlog of veterans' claims for benefits within the VA, both bills would also require the categorization of those claims; and

Whereas, After the claims are categorized, these bills would require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to identify those claims that need further development and refer them to a geographically appropriate office of the National Association of County Veterans Service Officers ("NACVSO") for such further development; and

Whereas, The NACVSO is an organization that seeks to actively promote the rights of veterans and their dependents and is officially recognized by the VA for the purpose of preparation, presentation, and prosecution of claims under laws administered by the VA; and

Whereas, NACVSO has approximately 2,400 full-time employees and members in 37 states; and

Whereas, Pursuant to these bills, each individual County Veterans Service Officers ("CVSO") office would be fully authorized to make personal contact with a veteran, dependent or spouse, and gather more information about or "develop" the claim; and

Whereas, After the CVSO develops such claims, the claims would be submitted to the VA indicating the claim is ready to be assigned a rating based on the degree of disability; and

Whereas, Funding provided pursuant to these bills may be used to establish new CVSO programs in states that do not currently have a CVSO program; and

Whereas, By allowing the CVSO to fully develop the claim, the claims process would be streamlined, allowing the claim to be processed more efficiently and ultimately reduce the backlog; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York urges Congress to hold hearings regarding Senate Bill 1186 and House of Representatives Bill 1264, which provide for a reduction in the backlog of claims for benefits pending with the Department of Veterans Affairs, and calling upon Congress to adopt these bills as expeditiously as possible.

GRS
9/19/03
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