

UVC Federal Legislation Watch

8 June 2020

Today there are hundreds of pieces of legislation on Capitol Hill pertaining to veterans issues. Fortunately for the UVC representatives from the American Legion, VFW and other major VSOs were able to assist in distilling this to a manageable list of legislation that the UVC can track. These bills include:

The Major Richard Star Act, HR 5995 / S 3393. This bill will provide a combat-disabled uniformed services retiree with fewer than 20 years of creditable service to concurrently receive, without reduction disability compensation and retired pay or combat-related special compensation. This legislation has the support of the UVC's Executive Committee. The UVC has requested each of Colorado's Federal legislators to support The Major Richard Star Act. Currently Congressman Joe Neguse and Congressman Jason Crow are among the 43 sponsors HR 5995 in the House of Representatives.

S 3761, introduced into the Senate on 19 May 2020. This bill would amend title 38, US Code, to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide veterans service organizations and recognized agent and attorney opportunities to review Department of Veterans Affairs disability rating determination before they are finalized. This would reinstate the critical 48-hour review period that ensures veteran representation in the disability process. The bill has been referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs where Senator Jon Tester of Montana is the Ranking Member and sponsor of this bill. The UVC will monitor this bill closely.

The Deborah Sampson Act, HR 3224/ S 514. The Deborah Sampson Act would require the Veteran Administration to ensure that gender specific services are

continuously available at every VA medical center. This bill has passed in the House of Representatives and been passed to the Senate as S 514 where it has the sponsorship of 46 Senators. Currently the bill is assigned to the Senate's Committee on Veterans Affairs. The UVC will monitor this bill.

HR 303, The Retired Pay Restoration Act. This bill allows the receipt of both military retired pay and veterans' disability compensation with respect to any service-connected disability. Under current law, only service-connected disabilities rated at 50% or more receive both without offset. Individuals who were retired or separated from military service due to a service-connected disability shall be eligible for the full concurrent receipt of both veterans' disability compensation and either military retired pay or combat-related special pay.

National Suicide Hotline Designation Act, S. 2661/HR 4194. The National Suicide Hotline Designation Act, a bill introduced by Senator Cory Gardner, passed the Senate in May 2020. HR 4194, the House of Representatives version, now rests in the House Energy & Commerce Subcommittee on Communications. The UVC will monitor and track this bill.

The Burn Pit Accountability Act, S 191 / HR 663. This bill requires the DOD to evaluate whether each member of the Armed Forces has been (1) based or stationed where an open air burn pit was used to dispose of waste, or (2) exposed to toxic airborne chemicals. Service members located where an open pit was used or exposed to toxic airborne chemicals must enroll in the Airborne Hazards & Open Burn Pit Registry. Evaluations of service members must be included in periodic health assessments, physical exams conducted prior to separation from active duty, and deployment assessments. The Department of Defense must share the results of the evaluations with the Department of

Veterans Affairs. Present Senator Michael Bennett and Congressmen Doug Lamborn, Scott Tipton, Jason Crow, and Ed Perlmutter co-sponsor their respective bills. The UVC will track and monitors this legislation.

S. 3812. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to expand eligibility for hospital care, medical services, and nursing home care from the Department of Veterans Affairs to include veterans of World War II. The bill was introduced 21 May 2020 and is current in the Senate's Committee on Veterans' Affairs. The UVC will monitor this bill.