



H.R. 1315- To amend title 38, United States Code, to provide specially adaptive housing assistance to certain disabled members of the Armed Forces residing temporarily in housing owned by a family...

H.R. 1315 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Representative Stephanie Herseth-Sandlin (D-SD) on March 5, 2007 and was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs where it was reported out by voice vote.

H.R. 1315 is expected to be considered on July 30, 2007.

Summary

H.R. 1315 combines four pieces of legislation; H.R. 1240 by Representative Jackson-Lee (D-TX), H.R. 1632 by Representative Reichert (R-WA), H.R. 1315 by Representative Herseth-Sandlin (D-SD) and H.R. 1750 by Representative Wynn (D-MD).

These four pieces of legislation assist veterans' in housing options. It increases the amount of time a service member has to pay on a mortgage before foreclosure, authorizes a grant program for students who specialize in visual impairment, orientation, or mobility and requires them to serve an amount of time at an approved Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) facility.

Additionally, the legislation provides a benefit to severely wounded (amputees, blind, paralyzed, etc) service members who are likely to be discharged.

Background

H.R. 1315 would extend the VA's Specially Adapted Housing benefit to severely wounded (amputees, blind, paralyzed, etc) who are likely to be discharged following long term convalescence in an active duty status. The benefit provides funds up to \$50,000, depending on the type of disability, to adapt their homes to their disability. Currently, only post-discharge veterans are eligible for the benefit.

The legislation would extend the Service member's Civil Relief Act's (SCRA) current 90 day moratorium on mortgage foreclosure to 180 days. This will allow service members who are

experiencing financial difficulties additional time to solve arrearages or to make other arrangements as appropriate.

**Note – during the Committee hearing Ranking Member Boozeman (R-AR) offered an amendment to reduce the SCRA moratorium to 120 days in order to prevent them from going further into debt. The amendment was defeated by voice vote.*

H.R. 1315 authorizes the VA to provide scholarships of up to \$15,000 per year to students pursuing education in the fields of visual impairment, orientation, or mobility. The students receiving scholarships would be required to work for a period of time at an approved VA facility. Those failing to meet their employment obligation would be required to repay the government for the amounts received. The scholarship program will enable VA to increase services to veterans needing rehabilitation for visual impairments.

It requires DoD, VA, the Dept of Labor, the Attorney General, and the Office of Special Counsel to adopt common reporting language for cases falling under the jurisdiction of the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA). USERRA provides a wide variety of employment protections for service members returning to civilian life following active duty. Currently, the various agencies involved in USERRA enforcement do not account for and report cases in a uniform manner. The lack of a common reporting practice makes it difficult for Congress to determine the extent of USERRA-related problems.

Additionally, it makes a technical correction the total number of authorized members of the Dept of Labor's Advisory Committee on Veterans' Employment, Training, and Employer Outreach to match the list of authorized members.

CBO Estimate

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates that “enacting H.R. 1315 would increase direct spending by requiring lenders to reduce interest rates on mortgages for some military members by an additional 180 days. That provision would modify the cost of some existing loan guarantees and would increase direct spending by \$8 million in 2008, CBO estimates. In addition, CBO estimates that implementing H.R. 1315 would result in discretionary costs of \$2 million over the 2008-2012 period, assuming the availability of appropriated funds. Enacting the bill would have no effect on federal revenues.”

Staff Contact

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