

either of two categories of terrorist acts defined in the Convention. The first category includes any act that constitutes an offense within the scope of and as defined in one of the counter terrorism treaties listed in the Annex to the Convention. The second category encompasses any other act intended to cause death or serious bodily injury to a civilian, or to any other person not taking an active part in hostilities in a situation of armed conflict, when the purpose of the act, by its nature or context, is to intimidate a population, or to compel a government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act.

The Convention imposes binding legal obligations upon States Parties either to submit for prosecution or to extradite any person within their jurisdiction who commits an offense as defined in Article 2 of the Convention, attempts to commit such an act, participates as an accomplice, organizes or directs others to commit such an offense, or in any other way contributes to the commission of an offense by a group of persons acting with a common purpose. A State Party is subject to these obligations without regard to the place where the alleged act covered by Article 2 took place.

States Parties to the Convention will also be obligated to provide one another legal assistance in investigations or criminal or extradition proceedings brought in respect of the offenses set forth in Article 2.

Legislation necessary to implement the Convention will be submitted to the Congress separately.

This Convention is a critical new weapon in the campaign against the scourge of international terrorism. I hope that all countries will become Parties to this Convention at the earliest possible time. I recommend, therefore, that the Senate give early and favorable consideration to this Convention, subject to the understanding, declaration and reservation that are described in the accompanying report of the Department of State.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON,
THE WHITE HOUSE, October 12, 2000.

VETERANS BENEFITS AND HEALTH CARE IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2000

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Chair lay before the Senate a message from the House of Representatives on the bill (S. 1402) to amend title 38, United States Code, to increase amounts of educational assistance for veterans under the Montgomery GI bill and to enhance programs providing educational benefits under that title, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER laid before the Senate the following message from the House of Representatives:

Resolved, That the bill from the Senate (S. 1402) entitled "An Act to amend title 38, United States Code, to enhance programs

providing education benefits for veterans, and for other purposes", do pass with the following amendments:

Strike out all after the enacting clause and insert:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS; REFERENCES TO TITLE 38, UNITED STATES CODE.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the "Veterans and Dependents Millennium Education Act".

(b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents of this Act is as follows:

- Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents; references to title 38, United States Code.
- Sec. 2. Increase in rates of basic educational assistance under Montgomery GI Bill.
- Sec. 3. Additional opportunity for certain VEAP participants to enroll in basic educational assistance under Montgomery GI Bill.
- Sec. 4. Increase in rates of survivors and dependents educational assistance.
- Sec. 5. Adjusted effective date for award of survivors' and dependents' educational assistance.
- Sec. 6. Revision of educational assistance interval payment requirements.
- Sec. 7. Availability of education benefits for payment for licensing or certification tests.
- Sec. 8. Extension of certain temporary authorities.
- Sec. 9. Codification of recurring provisions in annual Department of Veterans Affairs appropriations Acts.
- Sec. 10. Preservation of certain reporting requirements.

(c) REFERENCES TO TITLE 38, UNITED STATES CODE.—Except as otherwise expressly provided, whenever in this Act an amendment or repeal is expressed in terms of an amendment to, or repeal of, a section or other provision, the reference shall be considered to be made to a section or other provision of title 38, United States Code.

SEC. 2. INCREASE IN RATES OF BASIC EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE UNDER MONTGOMERY GI BILL.

(a) ACTIVE DUTY EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE.—(1) Section 3015 is amended—

(A) in subsection (a)(1), by striking "\$528" and inserting "\$720"; and

(B) in subsection (b)(1), by striking "\$429" and inserting "\$585".

(2) The amendments made by paragraph (1) shall take effect on October 1, 2002, and shall apply with respect to educational assistance allowances paid for months after September 2002.

(3) In the case of an educational assistance allowance paid for a month after September 2000, and before October 2002 under section 3015 of such title—

(A) subsection (a)(1) of such section shall be applied by substituting "\$600" for "\$528"; and

(B) subsection (b)(1) of such section shall be applied by substituting "\$487" for "\$429".

(b) CPI ADJUSTMENT.—No adjustment in rates of educational assistance shall be made under section 3015(g) of title 38, United States Code, for fiscal years 2001 and 2003.

SEC. 3. ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITY FOR CERTAIN VEAP PARTICIPANTS TO ENROLL IN BASIC EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE UNDER MONTGOMERY GI BILL.

(a) SPECIAL ENROLLMENT PERIOD.—Section 3018C is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

"(e)(1) A qualified individual (described in paragraph (2)) may make an irrevocable election under this subsection, during the 1-year period beginning on the date of the enactment of this subsection, to become entitled to basic educational assistance under this chapter. Such an election shall be made in the same manner as elections made under subsection (a)(5).

"(2) A qualified individual referred to in paragraph (1) is an individual who meets the following requirements:

"(A) The individual was a participant in the educational benefits program under chapter 32 of this title on or before October 9, 1996.

"(B) The individual has continuously served on active duty since October 9, 1996 (excluding the periods referred to in section 3202(1)(C) of this title), through at least April, 1, 2000.

"(C) The individual meets the requirements of subsection (a)(3).

"(D) The individual is discharged or released from active duty with an honorable discharge.

"(3)(A) Subject to succeeding provisions of this paragraph, with respect to a qualified individual who makes an election under paragraph (1) to become entitled to basic education assistance under this chapter—

"(i) the basic pay of the qualified individual shall be reduced (in a manner determined by the Secretary concerned) until the total amount by which such basic pay is reduced is \$2,700; and

"(ii) to the extent that basic pay is not so reduced before the qualified individual's discharge or release from active duty as specified in subsection (a)(4), at the election of the qualified individual—

"(I) the Secretary concerned shall collect from the qualified individual; or

"(II) the Secretary concerned shall reduce the retired or retainer pay of the qualified individual by,

an amount equal to the difference between \$2,700 and the total amount of reductions under clause (i), which shall be paid into the Treasury of the United States as miscellaneous receipts.

"(B)(i) The Secretary concerned shall provide for an 18-month period, beginning on the date the qualified individual makes an election under paragraph (1), for the qualified individual to pay that Secretary the amount due under subparagraph (A).

"(ii) Nothing in clause (i) shall be construed as modifying the period of eligibility for and entitlement to basic education assistance under this chapter applicable under section 3031 of this title.

"(C) The provisions of subsection (c) shall apply to individuals making elections under this subsection in the same manner as they applied to individuals making elections under subsection (a)(5).

"(4) With respect to qualified individuals referred to in paragraph (3)(A)(ii), no amount of educational assistance allowance under this chapter shall be paid to the qualified individual until the earlier of the date on which—

"(A) the Secretary concerned collects the applicable amount under subparagraph (1) of such paragraph; or

"(B) the retired or retainer pay of the qualified individual is first reduced under subparagraph (II) of such paragraph.

"(5) The Secretary, in conjunction with the Secretary of Defense, shall provide for notice to participants in the educational benefits program under chapter 32 of this title of the opportunity under this section to elect to become entitled to basic educational assistance under this chapter."

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 3018C(b) is amended by striking "subsection (a)" and inserting "subsection (a) or (e)".

SEC. 4. INCREASE IN RATES OF SURVIVORS AND DEPENDENTS EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE.

(a) SURVIVORS AND DEPENDENTS EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE.—(1) Section 3532 is amended—

(A) in subsection (a)(1)—

(i) by striking "\$485" and inserting "\$720";

(ii) by striking "\$365" and inserting "\$540"; and

(iii) by striking "\$242" and inserting "\$360";

(B) in subsection (a)(2), by striking "\$485" and inserting "\$720";

(C) in subsection (b), by striking "\$485" and inserting "\$720"; and

(D) in subsection (c)(2)—

(i) by striking “\$392” and inserting “\$582”;

(ii) by striking “\$294” and inserting “\$436”;

and

(iii) by striking “\$196” and inserting “\$291”.

(2) The amendments made by paragraph (1) shall take effect on October 1, 2002, and shall apply with respect to educational assistance allowances paid for months after September 2002.

(3) In the case of an educational assistance allowance paid for a month after September 2000 and before October 2002 under section 3532 of such title—

(A) subsection (a)(1) of such section shall be applied by substituting—

(i) “\$600” for “\$485”;

(ii) “\$450” for “\$365”;

and

(iii) “\$300” for “\$242”;

(B) subsection (a)(2) of such section shall be applied by substituting “\$600” for “\$485”;

(C) subsection (b) of such section shall be applied by substituting “\$600” for “\$485”; and

(D) subsection (c)(2) of such section shall be applied by substituting—

(i) “\$485” for “\$392”;

(ii) “\$364” for “\$294”;

and

(iii) “\$242” for “\$196”.

(b) CORRESPONDENCE COURSE.—(1) Section 3534(b) is amended by striking “\$485” and inserting “\$720”.

(2) The amendment made by paragraph (1) shall take effect on October 1, 2002, and shall apply with respect to educational assistance allowances paid under section 3534(b) of title 38, United States Code, for months after September 2002.

(3) In the case of an educational assistance allowance paid for a month after September 2000 and before October 2002 under section 3534 of such title, subsection (b) of such section shall be applied by substituting “\$600” for “\$485”.

(c) SPECIAL RESTORATIVE TRAINING.—(1) Section 3542(a) is amended—

(A) by striking “\$485” and inserting “\$720”;

(B) by striking “\$152” each place it appears and inserting “\$225”;

and

(C) by striking “\$16.16” and inserting “\$24”.

(2) The amendments made by paragraph (1) shall take effect on October 1, 2002, and shall apply with respect to educational assistance allowances paid under section 3542(a) of title 38, United States Code, for months after September 2002.

(3) In the case of an educational assistance allowance paid for a month after September 2000 and before October 2002 under section 3542 of such title, subsection (a) of such section shall be applied by substituting—

(A) “\$600” for “\$485”;

(B) “\$188” for “\$152” each place it appears; and

(C) “\$20” for “\$16.16”.

(d) APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING.—(1) Section 3687(b)(2) is amended—

(A) by striking “\$353” and inserting “\$524”;

(B) by striking “\$264” and inserting “\$392”;

(C) by striking “\$175” and inserting “\$260”;

and

(D) by striking “\$88” and inserting “\$131”.

(2) The amendments made by paragraph (1) shall take effect on October 1, 2002, and shall apply with respect to educational assistance allowances paid under section 3687(b)(2) of title 38, United States Code, for months after September 2002.

(3) In the case of an educational assistance allowance paid for a month after September 2000 and before October 2002 under section 3687 of such title, subsection (b)(2) of such section shall be applied by substituting—

(A) “\$437” for “\$353”;

(B) “\$327” for “\$264”;

(C) “\$216” for “\$175”;

and

(D) “\$109” for “\$88”.

(e) PROVISION FOR ANNUAL ADJUSTMENTS TO AMOUNTS OF ASSISTANCE.—

(1) CHAPTER 35.—(A) Subchapter VI of chapter 35 is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

“§3564. Annual adjustment of amounts of educational assistance

“With respect to any fiscal year, the Secretary shall provide a percentage increase (rounded to the nearest dollar) in the rates payable under sections 3532, 3534(b), and 3542(a) of this title equal to the percentage by which—

“(1) the Consumer Price Index (all items, United States city average) for the 12-month period ending on the June 30 preceding the beginning of the fiscal year for which the increase is made, exceeds

“(2) such Consumer Price Index for the 12-month period preceding the 12-month period described in paragraph (1).”.

(B) The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 35 is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 3563 the following new item:

“3564. Annual adjustment of amounts of educational assistance.”.

(2) CHAPTER 36.—Section 3687 is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(d) With respect to any fiscal year, the Secretary shall provide a percentage increase (rounded to the nearest dollar) in the rates payable under subsection (b)(2) equal to the percentage by which—

“(1) the Consumer Price Index (all items, United States city average) for the 12-month period ending on the June 30 preceding the beginning of the fiscal year for which the increase is made, exceeds

“(2) such Consumer Price Index for the 12-month period preceding the 12-month period described in paragraph (1).”.

(3) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this subsection shall apply with respect to fiscal year 2002 and each fiscal year beginning on or after October 1, 2003.

SEC. 5. ADJUSTED EFFECTIVE DATE FOR AWARD OF SURVIVORS’ AND DEPENDENTS’ EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 5113 is amended—

(1) by redesignating subsection (b) as subsection (c);

(2) in subsection (a), by striking “subsection (b) of this section” and inserting “subsections (b) and (c)”; and

(3) by inserting after subsection (a) the following new subsection:

“(b)(1) When determining the effective date of an award of survivors’ and dependents’ educational assistance under chapter 35 of this title for an individual described in paragraph (2) based on an original claim, the Secretary shall consider the individual’s application (under section 3513 of this title) as having been filed on the effective date from which the Secretary, by rating decision, determines that the individual is entitled to such educational assistance (such entitlement being based on the total service-connected disability evaluated as permanent in nature, or the service-connected death, of the spouse or parent from whom the individual’s eligibility is derived) if that date is more than 1 year before the date such rating decision is made.

“(2) An individual referred to in paragraph (1) is a person who is eligible for educational assistance under chapter 35 of this title by reason of subparagraph (A)(i), (A)(ii), (B), or (D) of section 3501(a)(1) of this title who—

“(A) submits to the Secretary an original application under such section 3513 for such educational assistance within 1 year of the date that the Secretary issues the rating decision referred to in paragraph (1);

“(B) claims such educational assistance for an approved program of education for months preceding the 1-year period ending on the date on which the individual’s application under such section was received by the Secretary; and

“(C) would have been entitled to such educational assistance for such course pursuit for such months, without regard to this subsection, if the individual had submitted such an application on the effective date from which the Sec-

retary determined the individual was eligible for such educational assistance.”.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by subsection (a) shall apply to applications first made under section 3513 of title 38, United States Code, that—

(1) are received on or after the date of the enactment of this Act; or

(2) on the date of the enactment of this Act, are pending (A) with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs or (B) exhaustion of available administrative and judicial remedies.

SEC. 6. REVISION OF EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE INTERVAL PAYMENT REQUIREMENTS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subclause (C) of the third sentence of section 3680(a) is amended to read as follows:

“(C) during periods between school terms where the educational institution certifies the enrollment of the eligible veteran or eligible person on an individual term basis if: (i) the period between such terms does not exceed 8 weeks; and (ii) both the terms preceding and following the period are not shorter in length than the period.”.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall apply with respect to payments of educational assistance under title 38, United States Code, for months beginning on or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 7. AVAILABILITY OF EDUCATION BENEFITS FOR PAYMENT FOR LICENSING OR CERTIFICATION TESTS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Sections 3452(b) and 3501(a)(5) are each amended by adding at the end the following new sentence: “Such term also includes licensing or certification tests, the successful completion of which demonstrates an individual’s possession of the knowledge or skill required to enter into, maintain, or advance in employment in a predetermined and identified vocation or profession, provided such tests and the licensing or credentialing organizations or entities that offer such tests are approved by the Secretary in accordance with section 3689 of this title.”.

(b) AMOUNT OF PAYMENT.—

(1) CHAPTER 30.—Section 3032 is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(g) PAYMENT AMOUNT FOR LICENSING OR CERTIFICATION TEST.—(1) Subject to paragraph (3), the amount of educational assistance payable under this chapter for a licensing or certification test described in section 3452(b) of this title is the lesser of \$2,000 or the fee charged for the test.

“(2) The number of months of entitlement charged in the case of any individual for such licensing or certification test is equal to the number (including any fraction) determined by dividing the total amount of educational assistance paid such individual for such test by the full-time monthly institutional rate of educational assistance which, except for paragraph (1) of this subsection, such individual would otherwise be paid under subsection (a)(1), (b)(1), (d), or (e)(1) of section 3015 of this title, as the case may be.

“(3) In no event shall payment of educational assistance under this subsection for such a test exceed the amount of the individual’s available entitlement under this chapter.”.

(2) CHAPTER 32.—Section 3232 is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(c) PAYMENT AMOUNT FOR LICENSING OR CERTIFICATION TEST.—(1) Subject to paragraph (3), the amount of educational assistance payable under this chapter for a licensing or certification test described in section 3452(b) of this title is the lesser of \$2,000 or the fee charged for the test.

“(2) The number of months of entitlement charged in the case of any individual for such licensing or certification test is equal to the number (including any fraction) determined by

dividing the total amount paid to such individual for such test by the full-time monthly institutional rate of the educational assistance allowance which, except for paragraph (1) of this subsection, such individual would otherwise be paid under this chapter.

“(3) In no event shall payment of educational assistance under this subsection for such a test exceed the amount of the individual’s available entitlement under this chapter.”.

(3) CHAPTER 34.—Section 3482 is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(h) PAYMENT AMOUNT FOR LICENSING OR CERTIFICATION TEST.—(1) Subject to paragraph (3), the amount of educational assistance payable under this chapter for a licensing or certification test described in section 3452(b) of this title is the lesser of \$2,000 or the fee charged for the test.

“(2) The number of months of entitlement charged in the case of any individual for such licensing or certification test is equal to the number (including any fraction) determined by dividing the total amount paid to such individual for such test by the full-time monthly institutional rate of the educational assistance allowance which, except for paragraph (1) of this subsection, such individual would otherwise be paid under this chapter.

“(3) In no event shall payment of educational assistance under this subsection for such a test exceed the amount of the individual’s available entitlement under this chapter.”.

(4) CHAPTER 35.—Section 3532 is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(f) PAYMENT AMOUNT FOR LICENSING OR CERTIFICATION TEST.—(1) Subject to paragraph (3), the amount of educational assistance payable under this chapter for a licensing or certification test described in section 3452(b) of this title is the lesser of \$2,000 or the fee charged for the test.

“(2) The number of months of entitlement charged in the case of any individual for such licensing or certification test is equal to the number (including any fraction) determined by dividing the total amount paid to such individual for such test by the full-time monthly institutional rate of the educational assistance allowance which, except for paragraph (1) of this subsection, such individual would otherwise be paid under this chapter.

“(3) In no event shall payment of educational assistance under this subsection for such a test exceed the amount of the individual’s available entitlement under this chapter.”.

(c) REQUIREMENTS FOR LICENSING AND CREDENTIALING TESTING.—

(I) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 36 is amended by inserting after section 3688 the following new section:

“§3689. Approval requirements for licensing and certification testing

“(a) IN GENERAL.—(1) No payment may be made for a licensing or certification test described in section 3452(b) or section 3501(a)(5) of this title unless the Secretary determines that the requirements of this section have been met with respect to such test and the organization or entity offering the test. The requirements of approval for tests and organizations or entities offering tests shall be in accordance with the relevant provisions of this part and with such regulations promulgated by the Secretary to carry out this section.

“(2) To the extent that the Secretary determines practicable, State approving agencies may, in lieu of the Secretary, approve licensing and certification tests, and organizations and entities offering such tests, under this section.

“(b) REQUIREMENTS FOR TESTS.—(1) Subject to paragraph (2), a licensing or certification test is approved for purposes of this section only if—

“(A) the test is required under Federal, State, or local law or regulation for an individual to enter into, maintain, or advance in employment in a predetermined and identified vocation or profession; or

“(B) the Secretary determines that the test is generally accepted, in accordance with relevant government, business, or industry standards, employment policies, or hiring practices, as attesting to a level of knowledge or skill required to qualify to enter into, maintain, or advance in employment in a predetermined and identified vocation or profession.

“(2) A licensing or certification test offered by a State, or a political subdivision of the State, is deemed approved by the Secretary.

“(c) REQUIREMENTS FOR ORGANIZATIONS OR ENTITIES OFFERING TESTS.—(1) Each organization or entity that is not an entity of the United States, a State, or political subdivision of a State, that offers a licensing or certification test for which payment may be made under this part, and that meets the following requirements shall be approved by the Secretary to offer such test:

“(A) The organization or entity certifies to the Secretary that each licensing or certification test offered by the organization or entity is required to obtain the license or certificate required to enter into, maintain, or advance in employment in a predetermined and identified vocation or profession.

“(B) The organization or entity is licensed, chartered, or incorporated in a State and has offered such tests for a minimum of 2 years before the date on which the organization or entity first submits to the Secretary an application for approval under this section.

“(C) The organization or entity employs, or consults with, individuals with expertise or substantial experience with respect to all areas of knowledge or skill that are measured by the test and that are required for the license of certificate issued.

“(D) The organization or entity has no direct financial interest in—

“(i) the outcome of a test; or

“(ii) organizations that provide the education or training of candidates for licenses or certificates required for vocations or professions.

“(E) The organization or entity maintains appropriate records with respect to all candidates who take such a test for a period prescribed by the Secretary, but in no case for a period of less than 3 years.

“(F)(i) The organization or entity promptly issues notice of the results of the test to the candidate for the license or certificate.

“(ii) The organization or entity has in place a process to review complaints submitted against the organization or entity with respect to a test the organization or entity offers or the process for obtaining a license or certificate required for vocations or professions.

“(G) The organization or entity furnishes to the Secretary such information with respect to a licensing or certification test offered by the organization or entity as the Secretary requires to determine whether payment may be made for the test under this part, including personal identifying information, fee payment, and test results. Such information shall be furnished in the form prescribed by the Secretary.

“(H) The organization or entity furnishes to the Secretary the following information:

“(i) A description of each licensing or certification test offered by the organization or entity, including the purpose of each test, the vocational, professional, governmental, and other entities that recognize the test, and the license of certificate issued upon successful completion of the test.

“(ii) The requirements to take such a test, including the amount of the fee charged for the test and any prerequisite education, training, skills, or other certification.

“(iii) The period for which the license or certificate awarded upon successful completion of such a test is valid, and the requirements for maintaining or renewing the license or certificate.

“(I) Upon request of the Secretary, the organization or entity furnishes such information to

the Secretary that the Secretary determines necessary to perform an assessment of—

“(i) the test conducted by the organization or entity as compared to the level of knowledge or skills that a license or certificate attests; and

“(ii) the applicability of the test over such periods of time as the Secretary determines appropriate.

“(2) With respect to each organization or entity that is an entity of the United States, a State, or political subdivision of a State, that offers a licensing or certification test for which payment may be made under this part, the following provisions of paragraph (1) shall apply to the entity: subparagraphs (E), (F), (G), and (H).

“(d) ADMINISTRATION.—(1) Except as otherwise specifically provided in this section or part, in implementing this section and making payment under this part for a licensing or certification test, the test is deemed to be a ‘course’ and the organization or entity that offers such test is deemed to be an ‘institution’ or ‘educational institution’, respectively, as those terms are applied under and for purposes of sections 3671, 3673, 3674, 3678, 3679, 3681, 3682, 3683, 3685, 3690, and 3696 of this title.

“(2) The Secretary shall use amounts appropriated to the Department in fiscal year 2001 for readjustment benefits to develop the systems and procedures required to make payments under this part for a licensing or certification test, such amounts not to exceed \$3,000,000.

“(e) PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION AND LICENSURE ADVISORY COMMITTEE.—(1) There is established within the Department a committee to be known as the Professional Certification and Licensure Advisory Committee (hereafter in this section referred to as the ‘Committee’).

“(2) The Committee shall advise the Secretary with respect to the requirements of organizations or entities offering licensing and certification tests to individuals for which payment for such tests may be made under this part, and such other related issues as the Committee determines to be appropriate.

“(3)(A) The Secretary shall appoint five individuals with expertise in matters relating to licensing and certification tests to serve as members of the Committee, of whom—

“(i) one shall be a representative of the Coalition for Professional Certification;

“(ii) one shall be a representative of the Council on Licensure and Enforcement; and

“(iii) one shall be a representative of the National Skill Standards Board (established under section 503 of the National Skill Standards Act of 1994 (20 U.S.C. 5933)).

“(B) The Secretary of Labor and the Secretary of Defense shall serve as ex-officio members of the Committee.

“(C) A vacancy in the Committee shall be filled in the manner in which the original appointment was made.

“(4)(A) The Secretary shall appoint the chairman of the Committee.

“(B) The Committee shall meet at the call of the chairman.

“(C)(i) Members of the Committee shall serve without compensation.

“(ii) Members of the Committee shall be allowed reasonable and necessary travel expenses, including per diem in lieu of subsistence, at rates authorized for persons serving intermittently in the Government service in accordance with the provisions of subchapter I of chapter 57 of title 5 while away from their homes or regular places of business in the performance of the responsibilities of the Committee.

“(5) The Committee shall terminate December 31, 2006.”.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 36 is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 3688 the following new item:

“3689. Approval requirements for licensing and certification testing.”.

(d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall take effect on October 1,

2000, and apply with respect to licensing and certification tests approved by the Secretary on or after such date.

SEC. 8. EXTENSION OF CERTAIN TEMPORARY AUTHORITIES.

(a) **ENHANCED LOAN ASSET SALE AUTHORITY.**—Section 3720(h)(2) is amended by striking “December 31, 2002” and inserting “December 31, 2008”.

(b) **HOME LOAN FEES.**—Section 3729(a) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (4)(B)—

(A) by striking “2002” and inserting “2008”; and

(B) by striking “2003” and inserting “2009”; and

(2) in paragraph (5)(C), by striking “October 1, 2002” and inserting “October 1, 2008”.

(c) **PROCEDURES APPLICABLE TO LIQUIDATION SALES ON DEFAULTED HOME LOANS GUARANTEED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.**—Section 3732(c)(11) is amended by striking “October 1, 2002” and inserting “October 1, 2008”.

(d) **INCOME VERIFICATION AUTHORITY.**—Section 5317(g) is amended by striking “September 30, 2002” and inserting “September 30, 2008”.

(e) **LIMITATION ON PENSION FOR CERTAIN RECIPIENTS OF MEDICAID-COVERED NURSING HOME CARE.**—Section 5503(f)(7) is amended by striking “September 30, 2002” and inserting “September 30, 2008”.

SEC. 9. CODIFICATION OF RECURRING PROVISIONS IN ANNUAL DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS APPROPRIATIONS ACTS.

(a) **CODIFICATION OF RECURRING PROVISIONS.**—(1) Section 313 is amended by adding at the end the following new subsections:

“(c) **COMPENSATION AND PENSION.**—Funds appropriated for Compensation and Pensions are available for the following purposes:

“(1) The payment of compensation benefits to or on behalf of veterans as authorized by section 107 and chapters 11, 13, 51, 53, 55, and 61 of this title.

“(2) Pension benefits to or on behalf of veterans as authorized by chapters 15, 51, 53, 55, and 61 of this title and section 306 of the Veterans’ and Survivors’ Pension Improvement Act of 1978.

“(3) The payment of benefits as authorized under chapter 18 of this title.

“(4) Burial benefits, emergency and other officers’ retirement pay, adjusted-service credits and certificates, payments of premiums due on commercial life insurance policies guaranteed under the provisions of article IV of the Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Civil Relief Act of 1940 (50 U.S.C. App. 540 et seq.), and other benefits as authorized by sections 107, 1312, 1977, and 2106 and chapters 23, 51, 53, 55, and 61 of this title and the World War Adjusted Compensation Act (43 Stat. 122, 123), the Act of May 24, 1928 (Public Law No. 506 of the 70th Congress; 45 Stat. 735), and Public Law 87–875 (76 Stat. 1198).

“(d) **MEDICAL CARE.**—Funds appropriated for Medical Care are available for the following purposes:

“(1) The maintenance and operation of hospitals, nursing homes, and domiciliary facilities.

“(2) Furnishing, as authorized by law, inpatient and outpatient care and treatment to beneficiaries of the Department, including care and treatment in facilities not under the jurisdiction of the Department.

“(3) Furnishing recreational facilities, supplies, and equipment.

“(4) Funeral and burial expenses and other expenses incidental to funeral and burial expenses for beneficiaries receiving care from the Department.

“(5) Administrative expenses in support of planning, design, project management, real property acquisition and disposition, construction, and renovation of any facility under the jurisdiction or for the use of the Department.

“(6) Oversight, engineering, and architectural activities not charged to project cost.

“(7) Repairing, altering, improving, or providing facilities in the medical facilities and homes under the jurisdiction of the Department, not otherwise provided for, either by contact or by the hire of temporary employees and purchase of materials.

“(8) Uniforms or uniform allowances, as authorized by sections 5901 and 5902 of title 5.

“(9) Aid to State homes, as authorized by section 1741 of this title.

“(10) Administrative and legal expenses of the Department for collecting and recovering amounts owed the Department as authorized under chapter 17 of this title and Public Law 87–693, popularly known as the Federal Medical Care Recovery Act (42 U.S.C. 2651 et seq.).

“(e) **MEDICAL ADMINISTRATION AND MISCELLANEOUS OPERATING EXPENSES.**—Funds appropriated for Medical Administration and Miscellaneous Operating Expenses are available for the following purposes:

“(1) The administration of medical, hospital, nursing home, domiciliary, construction, supply, and research activities authorized by law.

“(2) Administrative expenses in support of planning, design, project management, architectural work, engineering, real property acquisition and disposition, construction, and renovation of any facility under the jurisdiction or for the use of the Department, including site acquisition.

“(3) Engineering and architectural activities not charged to project costs.

“(4) Research and development in building construction technology.

“(f) **GENERAL OPERATING EXPENSES.**—Funds appropriated for General Operating Expenses are available for the following purposes:

“(1) Uniforms or allowances therefor.

“(2) Hire of passenger motor vehicles.

“(3) Reimbursement of the General Services Administration for security guard services.

“(4) Reimbursement of the Department of Defense for the cost of overseas employee mail.

“(5) Administration of the Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act of 1992 (10 U.S.C. 1143 note).

“(g) **CONSTRUCTION.**—Funds appropriated for Construction, Major Projects, and for Construction, Minor Projects, are available, with respect to a project, for the following purposes:

“(1) Planning.

“(2) Architectural and engineering services.

“(3) Maintenance or guarantee period services costs associated with equipment guarantees provided under the project.

“(4) Services of claims analysts.

“(5) Offsite utility and storm drainage system construction costs.

“(6) Site acquisition.

“(h) **CONSTRUCTION, MINOR PROJECTS.**—In addition to the purposes specified in subsection (g), funds appropriated for Construction, Minor Projects, are available for—

“(1) repairs to any of the nonmedical facilities under the jurisdiction or for the use of the Department which are necessary because of loss or damage caused by a natural disaster or catastrophe; and

“(2) temporary measures necessary to prevent or to minimize further loss by such causes.”.

(2)(A) Chapter 1 is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

“§ 116. Definition of cost of direct and guaranteed loans

“For the purpose of any provision of law appropriating funds to the Department for the cost of direct or guaranteed loans, the cost of any such loan, including the cost of modifying any such loan, shall be as defined in section 502 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 (2 U.S.C. 661a).”.

(B) The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by adding at the end the following new item:

“116. Definition of cost of direct and guaranteed loans.”.

(b) **EFFECTIVE DATE.**—Subsections (c) through (h) of section 313 of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a)(1), and section 116 of such title, as added by subsection (a)(2), shall take effect with respect to funds appropriated for fiscal year 2002.

SEC. 10. PRESERVATION OF CERTAIN REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.

(a) **INAPPLICABILITY OF PRIOR REPORTS TERMINATION PROVISION TO CERTAIN REPORTS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.**—Section 3003(a)(1) of the Federal Reports Elimination and Sunset Act of 1995 (31 U.S.C. 1113 note) does not apply to any report required to be submitted under any of the following: sections 503(c), 529, 541(c), 542(c), 3036, and 7312(d) of title 38, United States Code.

(b) **REPEAL OF REPORTING REQUIREMENTS TERMINATED BY PRIOR LAW.**—Sections 8111A(f) and 8201(h) are repealed.

(c) **SUNSET OF CERTAIN REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.**—

(1) **ANNUAL REPORT ON EQUITABLE RELIEF CASES.**—Section 503(c) is amended by adding at the end the following new sentence: “No report shall be required under this subsection after December 31, 2004.”.

(2) **BIENNIAL REPORT OF ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON FORMER PRISONERS OF WAR.**—Section 541(c)(1) is amended by inserting “through 2003” after “each odd-numbered year”.

(3) **BIENNIAL REPORT OF ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON WOMEN VETERANS.**—Section 542(c)(1) is amended by inserting “through 2004” after “each even-numbered year”.

(4) **BIENNIAL REPORTS ON MONTGOMERY GI BILL.**—Subsection (d) of section 3036 is amended to read as follows:

“(d) No report shall be required under this section after January 1, 2005.”.

(5) **ANNUAL REPORT OF SPECIAL MEDICAL ADVISORY GROUP.**—Section 7312(d) is amended by adding at the end the following new sentence: “No report shall be required under this subsection after December 31, 2004.”.

(d) **COST INFORMATION TO BE PROVIDED WITH EACH REPORT REQUIRED BY CONGRESS.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—(A) Chapter 1, as amended by section 9(2)(A), is further amended by adding at the end the following new section:

“§ 117. Reports to Congress: cost information

“Whenever the Secretary submits to Congress, or any committee of Congress, a report that is required by law or by a joint explanatory statement of a committee of conference of the Congress, the Secretary shall include with the report—

“(1) a statement of the cost of preparing the report; and

“(2) a brief explanation of the methodology used in preparing that cost statement.”.

(B) The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter, as amended by section 9(2)(B), is further amended by adding at the end the following new item:

“117. Reports to Congress: cost information.”.

(2) **EFFECTIVE DATE.**—Section 117 of title 38, United States Code, as added by paragraph (1) of this subsection, shall apply with respect to any report submitted by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs after the end of the 90-day period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act.

AMENDMENT NO. 4314

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate concur in the House amendments with a further amendment which is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The clerk will report the amendment.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Alaska [Mr. MURKOWSKI] for Mr. SPECTER, proposes an amendment numbered 4314.

(The text of the amendment is printed in today's RECORD under "Amendments Submitted.")

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that an explanatory statement be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT ON SENATE AMENDMENTS TO HOUSE AMENDMENTS TO S. 1402, AS AMENDED

The Senate amendments to the House amendments to S. 1402, as amended, reflect a compromise agreement that the House and Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs have reached on H.R. 284, H.R. 4268, H.R. 4850, H.R. 5109, H.R. 5139, H.R. 5346, H. Con. Res. 413, S. 1076, S. 1402, and S. 1810. On May 23, 2000, the House passed S. 1402 with an amendment consisting of the text of H.R. 4268 as reported. H.R. 4850 passed the House on July 25, 2000. H.R. 5109 passed the House on September 21, 2000. H.R. 284 passed the House on October 3, 2000. S. 1076 passed the Senate on September 8, 1999, and S. 1810 passed the Senate on September 21, 2000. S. 1402 passed the Senate on July 26, 1999. H. Con. Res. 413 was introduced on September 28, 2000. H.R. 5346 was introduced on September 29, 2000. H.R. 5139 passed the House on October 3, 2000.

The House and Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs have prepared the following explanation of S. 1402, as amended (hereinafter referred to as the "Compromise Agreement"). Differences between the provisions contained in the Compromise Agreement and the related provisions of H.R. 284, H.R. 4268, H.R. 4850, H.R. 5109, S. 1076, S. 1402, and S. 1810 are noted in this document, except for clerical corrections, conforming changes made necessary by the Compromise Agreement and minor drafting, technical and clarifying changes.

TITLE I—EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROVISIONS

Subtitle A—Montgomery GI Bill Educational Assistance

INCREASE IN RATES OF BASIC EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE UNDER THE MONTGOMERY GI BILL

Current Law

Section 3011 of title 38, United States Code, establishes basic educational assistance entitlement under the All-Volunteer Force Educational Assistance Program (commonly referred to as the "Montgomery GI Bill" or "MGIB") Active Duty program. Section 3015 establishes the base amount of such educational assistance at the monthly rate of \$528 for a 3-year period of service and \$429 for a 2-year period of service. These amounts increased to \$552 per month and \$449 per month, respectively, on October 1, 2000.

House Bill

Section 2 of the House amendments to S. 1402 would increase the current monthly rate of basic education benefits to \$600 per month effective October 1, 2000, and to \$720 per month on October 1, 2002, for full-time students. The monthly rate for 2-year enlistees would increase to \$487 per month effective October 1, 2000, and to \$585 per month on October 1, 2002. This section provides parallel increases for part-time students and similar adjustments to the rates paid for correspondence and other types of training. No cost-of-living increases would be made in fiscal years 2001 and 2003.

Senate Bill

Section 4 of S. 1402 would increase the monthly rate of basic education benefits to \$600 per month for 3-year enlistees and \$488 per month for 2-year enlistees.

Compromise Agreement

Under section 101 of the compromise agreement, effective November 1, 2000, the basic education benefit would be increased from \$552 per month (effective October 1, 2000) to \$650 per month for a 3-year period of service, and \$528 per month for a 2-year period of service.

UNIFORM REQUIREMENT FOR HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA OR EQUIVALENCY BEFORE APPLICATION FOR MONTGOMERY GI BILL BENEFITS

Current Law

To be eligible to receive educational assistance, section 3011(a)(2) of title 38, United States Code, requires that a servicemember complete the requirements of a secondary school diploma (or equivalent certificate) before the end of the individual's initial obligated period of active duty. Section 3012(a)(2) contains a similar requirement for servicemembers who serve 2 years of active duty as part of a 6-year Selected Reserve commitment.

Senate Bill

Section 111 of S. 1810 would create a single, uniform secondary school diploma requirement as a prerequisite for eligibility for education benefits—a requirement that, prior to applying for benefits, the applicant will have received a high school diploma or equivalency certificate, or will have completed the equivalent of 12 semester hours in a program of education leading to a standard college degree.

House Bill

The House bills contain no comparable provision.

Compromise Agreement

Section 102 of the compromise agreement follows the Senate language, modified to reflect a new 10-year eligibility period for individuals affected by this provision, which would begin tolling on such individual's last discharge (or release from active duty) or the effective date of this Act, whichever is later.

Current Law

Sections 3011(a)(1)(A)(i) and 3012(a)(1)(A)(i) of title 38, United States Code, set forth initial-period-of-active-duty requirements to earn basic educational assistance entitlement under the Montgomery GI Bill. The period within which a servicemember's eligibility for educational assistance can be established is currently restricted to the initial period of active duty service.

Senate Bill

Section 112 of S. 1810 would strike the requirement that MGIB benefit entitlement be predicated on serving an "initial" period of obligated service and substitute in its place a requirement that an obligated period of active duty be served.

House Bill

The House bills contain no comparable provision.

Compromise Agreement

Section 103 of the compromise agreement follows the Senate language with a clarifying amendment that for an obligated period of service of at least 3 years, the servicemember would have to complete at least 30 months of continuous active duty under that period of obligated service. In addition, the compromise agreement contains a modification to reflect a new 10-year eligibility period for individuals affected by this provision, which would begin tolling on such individual's last discharge (or release from active duty) or the effective date of this Act, whichever is later.

ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITY FOR CERTAIN VEAP PARTICIPANTS TO ENROLL IN BASIC EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE UNDER MONTGOMERY GI BILL

Current Law

Section 3018C of title 38, United States Code, furnishes an opportunity for certain post-Vietnam-era Veterans' Educational Assistance Program (VEAP) participants to convert to the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) if the individual was a participant in VEAP on October 9, 1996, was serving on active duty on that date, meets high school diploma or equivalency requirements before applying for MGIB benefits, is discharged from active duty after the individual makes the election to convert, and during the 1-year period beginning on October 9, 1996, makes an irrevocable election to receive benefits under the MGIB in lieu of VEAP, and also elects a \$1,200 pay reduction.

House Bill

Section 3 of the House amendments to S. 1402 would furnish individuals who have served continuously on active duty since October 9, 1996, through at least April 1, 2000, and who either turned down a previous opportunity to convert to the MGIB or had a zero balance in their VEAP account, the option to pay \$2,700 to convert to the MGIB program; individuals would have 12 months to elect to convert and 18 months to make payment.

Senate Bill

The Senate bills contain no comparable provision.

Compromise Agreement

Section 104 of the compromise agreement contains the House language.

INCREASED ACTIVE DUTY EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE BENEFIT FOR CONTRIBUTING MEMBERS

Current Law

Section 3011(b) of title 38, United States Code, requires servicemembers who elect to participate in the Montgomery GI Bill program to participate in a voluntary pay reduction of \$100 per month for the first 12 months of active service to establish entitlement to basic educational assistance.

Senate Bill

Section 6 of S. 1810 would allow servicemembers who have not opted out of MGIB participation to increase the monthly rate of educational benefits they will receive after service by making contributions, at any time prior to leaving service, over and above the \$1,200 basic pay reduction necessary to establish MGIB eligibility. Under section 6, a servicemember could contribute up to an additional \$600 in multiples of \$4. The monthly rate of basic educational assistance would be increased by \$1 per month for each \$4 so contributed. Thus, MGIB participants who "use up" their full 36 months of MGIB benefits would receive a 9-to-1 return on their additional contribution investment. A maximum in-service contribution of \$600 would yield an additional \$5,400 of entitlement to the 36-month MGIB benefit.

House Bill

The House bills contain no comparable provision.

Compromise Agreement

Section 105 of the compromise agreement follows the Senate language with amendments to make this provision effective May 1, 2001, and to make eligible any servicemember who was on active duty on the date of enactment and subsequently discharged between date of enactment and May 1, 2001 to have until July 31, 2001. These individuals would have until July 31, 2001, to make an election to "buy up" additional benefits.

Subtitle B—Survivors' and Dependents'
Educational Assistance

INCREASE IN RATES OF SURVIVORS' AND
DEPENDENTS' EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE

Current Law

Section 3532 of title 38, United States Code, provides survivors' and dependents' educational assistance (DEA) allowances of \$485 per month for full-time school attendance, with lesser amounts for part-time training. Generally, eligible survivors and dependents include unremarried spouses of veterans who died or are permanently or totally disabled or servicemembers who are missing in action or captured for more than 90 days by a hostile force or detained or interned for more than 90 days by a foreign government. Under section 3534, such benefits are also available for correspondence courses, special restorative training, and apprenticeship training.

House Bill

Section 4 of the House amendments to S. 1402 would increase DEA benefits for full-time classroom training students to \$600 per month effective October 1, 2000, and \$720 per month effective October 1, 2002, with parallel increases for part-time students and similar adjustments to the rates paid for correspondence and other types of training. Apprenticeship training would increase from \$353 to \$437 per month effective October 1, 2000, and \$524 per month effective October 1, 2002. This provision also requires annual cost-of-living allowances for DEA benefits.

Senate Bill

Section 5 of S. 1402 would increase the full-time rate of DEA benefits by 13.6 percent to \$550 per month, and make parallel increases in the benefit rates afforded to three-quarter time and half-time students. Increases of 13.6 percent in the amounts for correspondence courses, special restorative training, and apprenticeship training would also be afforded.

Compromise Agreement

Under section 111 of the compromise agreement, effective November 1, 2000, the basic education benefit for survivors and dependents would increase from \$485 per month to \$588 per month, with future annual cost-of-living increases effective October 1, 2001.

ELECTION OF CERTAIN RECIPIENTS OF COM-
MENCEMENT OF PERIOD OF ELIGIBILITY FOR
SURVIVORS' AND DEPENDENTS' EDUCATIONAL
ASSISTANCE

Current Law

Section 3512(a)(3) of title 38, United States Code, provides that if the Secretary first finds that the parent from whom eligibility for DEA benefits is derived has a total and permanent service-connected disability, or if the death of the parent from whom eligibility is derived occurs between an eligible child's 18th and 26th birthdays, then such eligibility period shall end 8 years after whichever date last occurs: (1) the date on which the Secretary first finds that the parent from whom eligibility is derived has a total and permanent service-connected disability, or (2) the date of death of the parent from whom eligibility is derived. "First finds" is defined in this section as either the date the Secretary notifies an eligible parent of total and permanent service-connected disability or the effective date of such disability award.

Senate Bill

Section 114 of S. 1810 would allow a child to elect the beginning date of eligibility for DEA benefits that is between (1) in the case of a child whose eligibility is based on a parent who has a total and permanent service-connected disability, the effective date of the rating determination and the date of notification by the Secretary for such disability, (2) in the case of a child whose eligi-

bility is based on the death of a parent, the date of the parent's death and the date of the Secretary's decision that the death was service-connected.

House Bill

The House bills contain no comparable provision.

Compromise Agreement

Section 112 of the compromise agreement contains the Senate language.

ADJUSTED EFFECTIVE DATE FOR AWARD OF SUR-
VIVORS' AND DEPENDENTS' EDUCATIONAL AS-
SISTANCE

Current Law

Section 5113 of title 38, United States Code, states that except for the effective date of adjusted benefits, dates relating to awards under chapters 30, 31, 32, 34, and 35, or chapter 1606 of title 10 shall, to the extent feasible, correspond to effective dates relating to awards of disability compensation.

House Bill

Section 4 of the House amendments to S. 1402 would permit the award of DEA benefits to be retroactive to the date of the entitling event, that is, service-connected death or award of a total and permanent service-connected disability. This provision would be limited to eligible persons who submit an original claim for DEA benefits within 1 year after the date of the rating decision first establishing the person's entitlement.

Senate Bill

Section 115 of S. 1810 would tie the effective date of award for DEA benefits to the date of the entitling event, i.e., the date of a veteran's service-connected death or award of a permanent and total disability rating. This provision would be limited to eligible persons who submit an original claim for DEA benefits within 1 year after the date of the rating decision first establishing the person's entitlement.

Compromise Agreement

Section 113 of the compromise agreement contains the Senate language.

AVAILABILITY UNDER SURVIVORS' AND DEPEND-
ENTS' EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE OF PRE-
PARATORY COURSES FOR COLLEGE AND GRAD-
UATE SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS

Current Law

Sections 3002(3) and 3501(a)(5) of title 38, United States Code, define the "program of education" for which veterans and surviving spouses and children, receive educational assistance benefits. Section 701 of Public Law 106-118 modified section 3002(3) of title 38, United States Code, to permit a veteran to use benefits for preparatory courses. Examples of preparatory courses include courses for standardized tests used for admission to college or graduate school.

Senate Bill

Section 113 of S. 1810 would allow survivors' and dependents' educational assistance benefits to be provided for use on preparatory courses.

House Bill

The House bills contain no comparable provision.

Compromise Agreement

Section 114 of the compromise agreement follows the Senate language with an amendment clarifying that qualifying persons may pursue preparatory courses prior to the person's 18th birthday.

Subtitle C—General Educational Assistance

REVISION OF EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE
INTERVAL PAYMENT REQUIREMENTS

Current Law

Section 3680(a)(C) of title 38, United States Code, allows VA to pay educational assist-

ance for periods between a term, semester, or quarter if the interval between these periods does not exceed one calendar month.

House Bill

Section 6 of the House amendments to S. 1402 would allow monthly educational assistance benefits to be paid between term, quarter, or semester intervals of up to 8 weeks.

Senate Bill

The Senate bills contain no comparable provision.

Compromise Agreement

Section 121 of the compromise agreement contains the House language.

AVAILABILITY OF EDUCATION BENEFITS FOR
PAYMENT FOR LICENSING OR CERTIFICATION
TESTS

Current Law

Chapters 30, 31, 32, 34, 35, and 36 of title 38, United States Code, do not currently authorize use of VA educational assistance benefits for occupational licensing or certification tests.

House Bill

Section 7 of the House amendments to S. 1402 would allow veterans' and DEA benefits to be used for up to \$2,000 in fees for civilian occupational licensing or certification examinations that are necessary to enter, maintain, or advance into employment in a vocation or profession. This section would establish various requirements regarding the use of such entitlement and requirements for organizations or entities offering licensing or certification tests. This section also establishes minimum approval requirements of a licensing or certification body, requirements for tests, requirements for organizations or entities offering these tests, VA administrative authority (including a requirement to develop the computer systems and procedures to make payments to beneficiaries for these tests), and a seven-member, organization-specific VA Professional Certification and Licensing Advisory Committee.

Senate Bill

The Senate bills contain no comparable provision.

Compromise Agreement

Section 122 of the compromise agreement follows the House language with an amendment that the Secretary shall name seven individuals to the VA Professional Certification and Licensing Advisory Committee, an amendment that deletes specific names of organizations from which members shall be named, and an amendment that deletes the requirement that members shall serve without compensation.

INCREASE FOR FISCAL YEARS 2001 AND 2002 IN AG-
GREGATE ANNUAL AMOUNT AVAILABLE FOR
STATE APPROVING AGENCIES FOR ADMINIS-
TRATIVE EXPENSES

Current Law

Section 3674(a)(4) of title 38, United States Code, makes available amounts not exceeding \$13 million in each fiscal year for duties carried out by State Approving Agencies.

House Bill

The House bills contain no comparable provision.

Senate Bill

The Senate bills contain no comparable provision.

Compromise Agreement

Section 123 of the compromise agreement amends the amount available for State Approving Agencies to \$14 million for fiscal year 2001 and fiscal year 2002.

TITLE II—HEALTH PROVISIONS

Subtitle A—Personnel Matters

ANNUAL NATIONAL PAY COMPARABILITY ADJUSTMENT FOR NURSES EMPLOYED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Current Law

The rate of pay for VA nurses is determined using a mechanism contained in Subchapter IV of Chapter 74, title 38, United States Code. The law links changes in total pay to nurse compensation trends in local health care labor markets. This locality pay feature has not always produced the results envisioned by Congress. For example, even though many VA nurses received very substantial one-time increases as a consequence of the 1990 restructuring of basic pay, some VA nurses have not received any additional pay raises since that time.

House Bill

Section 101 of H.R. 5109 would reform the local labor market survey process and replace it with a discretionary survey technique. The bill would provide more flexibility to VA medical center directors to obtain the data needed to complete necessary surveys and also restrict their authority to withhold indicated rate increases. Directors would be prohibited from reducing nurse pay. In addition, the House bill would also guarantee VA nurses a national comparability increase equivalent to the amount provided to other federal employees. The bill also would require Veterans Health Administration network directors to consult with nurses on questions of policy affecting the work of VA nurses, and would provide for registered nurses' participation on medical center committees considering clinical care, budget matters, or resource allocation involving the care and treatment of veteran patients.

Senate Bill

Senate bills contain no comparable provision.

Compromise Agreement

Section 201 of the compromise agreement contains the House language.

SPECIAL PAY FOR DENTISTS

Current Law

Subchapter III of Chapter 74, title 38, United States Code, authorizes special pay to physicians and dentists employed in the Veterans Health Administration. This authority is intended to improve recruitment and retention of dentists and physicians.

House Bill

Section 102 of H.R. 5109 would revise and increase the rates of special pay for VA dentists. This is the first proposed change in these rates since 1991.

Senate Bill

The Senate bills contain no comparable provision.

Compromise Agreement

Section 202 of the compromise agreement contains the House language. The Committees urge medical center directors to utilize the full range of pay increases authorized, including increases in the higher range, to optimize dentist recruitment and retention efforts.

EXEMPTION FOR PHARMACISTS FROM CEILING ON SPECIAL SALARY RATES

Current Law

Under section 7455 of title 38, United States Code, VA has authority to increase rates of basic pay for certain health care personnel—either nationally, locally or on another geographic basis—when deemed necessary for successful recruiting and retention. Special rates may be granted in response to salaries in local labor markets, but may not enable

VA to be a pay leader. With limited exceptions, the law restricts such “special salary rates” to a maximum pay rate, but exempts two categories of health care personnel from that statutory ceiling: nurse anesthetists and physical therapists.

House Bill

Section 103 of H.R. 5109 adds VA pharmacists to the existing categories of VA personnel exempted from such statutory pay ceilings. This amendment would enable VA to improve retention of the most senior members of the current pharmacy workforce and would improve its competitiveness in recruiting new pharmacists.

Senate Bill

The Senate bills contain no comparable provision.

Compromise Agreement

Section 203 of the compromise agreement contains the House language.

TEMPORARY FULL-TIME APPOINTMENTS OF CERTAIN MEDICAL PERSONNEL

Current Law

Section 7405 of title 38, United States Code, authorizes VA to provide temporary appointments of individuals in certain professions, including nursing, pharmacy, and respiratory, physical, and occupational therapy, who have successfully completed a full course of study but who are pending registration, licensure, or certification. Upon obtaining the required credentials, these professionals may be converted to career appointments. This temporary appointment authority provides VA a means of recruiting new health professionals still in the process of meeting the technical qualification standards pertinent to their fields.

However, VA must now limit physician assistants (PAs) waiting to take the PA certification examination to a general 1 year, non-renewable appointment. Since the national certification examination is only offered once a year, this 1-year appointment limits VA's efforts to provide a smooth transition from a training appointment to a permanent appointment for such graduates.

House Bill

Section 105 of H.R. 5109 would amend section 7405(c)(2) of title 38, United States Code, to add the position of physician assistant to the existing group of professional and technical occupations for which VA may make temporary graduate technician appointments, provided these individuals have completed training programs acceptable to the Secretary. Under this appointment authority, graduate physician assistants would have up to 2 years to obtain professional certification or licensure.

Senate Bill

Section 203 of S. 1810 would accomplish the same ends as the above-described language with respect to physician assistant temporary graduate technician appointments.

Compromise Agreement

Section 204(a) of the compromise agreement contains the House language.

MEDICAL SUPPORT PERSONNEL

Current Law

Section 7405 of title 38, United States Code, permits the temporary appointment of certain medical support personnel who work primarily in the laboratories and other facilities of VA principal investigators who have been awarded VA research and development funds through VA's scientific merit review process. These technicians are appointed for a maximum term of 2 years. The normal VA cycle of 3-year research awards conflicts with the 2-year maximum term for appointments of these key personnel in VA's research and development program.

House Bill

Section 105 of H.R. 5109 would amend section 7405(c)(3) of title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Secretary to make and to renew temporary full time appointments for periods not to exceed 3 years.

Senate Bill

The Senate bills contain no comparable provision.

Compromise Agreement

Section 204(b) of the compromise agreement contains the House language.

QUALIFICATIONS OF SOCIAL WORKERS

Current Law

Section 7402(b)(9) of title 38, United States Code, requires that a VA social worker become licensed, certified, or registered in the state in which he or she works within 3 years of initial appointment in this capacity by the VA. Certain states, such as California, impose prerequisites to the licensure examination that routinely require more than 3 years to satisfy. Many states do not provide reciprocity in social work licensure, and thus will not grant a license in the absence of a new state licensing examination. At present, VA social workers are the only VA health care practitioners who cannot use their state licenses to gain credentials in other states' VA medical centers.

House Bill

Section 106 of H.R. 5109 would allow the Secretary, on the recommendation of the Under Secretary for Health, to waive the 3-year requirement in order to provide sufficient time to newly graduated or transferred VA social workers to prepare for their state licensure examinations.

Senate Bill

The Senate bills contain no comparable provision.

Compromise Agreement

Section 205 of the compromise agreement contains the House language.

PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT ADVISOR TO THE UNDER SECRETARY FOR HEALTH

Current Law

Section 7306 of title 38, United States Code, establishes the Office of the Under Secretary for Health and requires that the office include representatives of certain health care professions. VA is the nation's largest single employer of physician assistants (PAs), with over 1,100 physician assistants on VA's employment rolls. Nevertheless, PAs are not represented by a member of their field in the office of the Under Secretary for Health.

House Bill

Section 104 of H.R. 5109 would establish a PA consultant position which would be filled by a VHA physician assistant designated by the Under Secretary for Health. This individual could be assigned to the field with occasional official visits as needed to VHA headquarters or elsewhere as required to fulfill assigned duties of the position. The PA consultant would advise the Under Secretary on all matters relating to the utilization and employment of physician assistants in the Veterans Health Administration.

Senate Bill

Section 202 of S. 1810 would add an Advisor on Physician Assistants to the immediate Office of the Under Secretary for Health, would require this individual to serve in an advisory capacity and would require that the PA advisor shall advise the Under Secretary on matters regarding general and expanded utilization, clinical privileges, and employment (including various specific matters associated therewith) of physician assistants in the Veterans Health Administration.

Compromise Agreement

Section 206 of the compromise agreement incorporates portions of both the House and Senate language. The Committees call upon VA to provide the individual selected as Advisor on Physician Assistants with necessary support and resources to enable this consultant to fulfill the assigned responsibilities of the position.

EXTENSION OF VOLUNTARY SEPARATION
INCENTIVE PAYMENTS*Current Law*

Public Law 106-117, the Veterans Millennium Health Care and Benefits Act of 1999, authorized a temporary program of voluntary separation incentive payments to assist VA in restructuring its workforce. This program limited VA to a 15-month authorization period for such "buyouts" of VA employees, limited to 4,700 the number of staff who could participate, and required VA to make a contribution of 26 percent of the average salary of participating employees to the Civil Service Retirement and Disability Fund. This provision also requires a one-for-one employee replacement for each such buyout approved under this policy.

House Bill

Section 107 of H.R. 5109 would amend title XI of Public Law 106-117 to increase the number of VA positions subject to buyouts to 8,110. The House measure would also adjust the contribution made by VA to the retirement fund to 15 percent, an amount equivalent to the amount that most other Federal agencies must contribute to the fund for their buyout participants. The measure extends VA's buyout authority from December 31, 2000 to December 31, 2002.

Senate Bill

The Senate bills contain no comparable provision.

Compromise Agreement

Section 207 of the compromise agreement follows the House language, but limits the number of VA positions subject to buyouts to 7,734 and allocates the positions for activities of the Veterans Health Administration, Veterans Benefits Administration, National Cemetery Administration, and VA staff offices.

Subtitle B—Military Service Issues
MILITARY SERVICE HISTORY*Current Law*

No provision.

House Bill

Section 301 of H.R. 5109 would require VA to take and maintain a thorough history of each veteran's health, including a military medical history. Ascertaining that a veteran was a prisoner of war, participated directly in combat, or was exposed to sustained sub-freezing conditions, toxic substances, environmental hazards, or nuclear ionizing radiation often facilitates diagnosis and treatment of veterans. The House bill would provide veterans assurance that such a policy becomes a matter of routine clinical practice in VA.

Senate Bill

The Senate bills contain no comparable provision.

Compromise Agreement

Section 211 of the compromise agreement adopts the intent of the House proposal, but in the form of a Sense of the Congress Resolution to express the sense of Congress that VA proceed to implement a system of record keeping to record veterans' military history.

STUDY OF POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER
(PTSD) IN VIETNAM VETERANS*Current Law*

Public Law 98-160 directed VA to conduct a large-scale survey on the prevalence and in-

cidence of PTSD and other psychological problems in Vietnam veterans. The study found that 15 percent of male and 8.5 percent of female Vietnam veterans suffered from PTSD. Among those exposed to high levels of war zone stress, however, PTSD rates were dramatically higher. Also, the study found that nearly one-third of Vietnam veterans had suffered from PTSD at some point after military service.

House Bill

Section 302 of HR 5109 would direct the VA to enter into a contract with an "appropriate entity" to carry out a follow-up study to the study conducted under Public Law 98-160.

Senate Bill

The Senate bills contain no comparable provision.

Compromise Agreement

Section 212 of the compromise agreement contains the House language. The Committees agree the new study should be kept distinct and independent from VA, as in the original. The compromise agreement is not intended to pre-judge the entity that will win this award.

Subtitle C—Medical Administration

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS FISHER
HOUSES*Current Law*

Current law does not explicitly provide VA with authority to house veterans overnight to expedite outpatient care or next-day hospital admissions. Nor does current law provide explicit authority for VA to accept, maintain, or operate facilities for housing families or others who accompany veterans to VA facilities. However, most VA medical centers offer veterans who live some distance from a medical facility from which they are receiving care or services help with some form of lodging to facilitate scheduled visits or admissions. Indeed, more than 115 facilities offer lodging of some kind on VA grounds, and services are available in non-VA facilities at a number of other locations. Also, over the years, many VA medical centers have converted unused wards and other available space to establish temporary lodging facilities for use by patients. The Under Secretary for Health has encouraged medical centers to establish such facilities to avert the need for hospitalizing patients when outpatient treatment is more appropriate. This guidance to VA facilities suggested that facilities could provide lodging without charge to outpatients and their family members and others accompanying veterans when "medically necessary." The guidance also sanctioned the use of a revocable license for family members under which an individual could be required to pay VA a fee equal to the fair-market value of the services being furnished.

House Bill

Section 404 of H.R. 5109 would clarify VA's authority to provide temporary overnight accommodations in "Fisher Houses," built with funds donated by the Zachary and Elizabeth M. Fisher Foundation. Four such facilities are now being operated in conjunction with VA medical centers and other similar facilities located at or near a VA facility. These accommodations are available to veterans who have business at a VA medical facility and must travel a significant distance to receive Department services, and to other individuals accompanying veterans. Section 404 would also give VA clear authority to charge veterans (and those accompanying them) for overnight accommodations and apply fees collected to support continuation of these services. The measure would require VA to promulgate regulations to address matters such as the appropriate limitations

on the use of the facilities and the length of time individuals may stay in the facilities.

Senate Bill

The Senate bills contain no comparable provision.

Compromise Agreement

Section 221 of the compromise agreement contains the House language.

EXCEPTION TO THE RECAPTURE RULE

Current Law

Section 8136 of title 38, United States Code, requires VA to "recapture" the amount of a grant to a state home for purposes of building or renovating a state veterans home, if, within 20 years, the state home ceases to be used for providing domiciliary, nursing home, or hospital care for veterans. This provision could be interpreted to require recapture of the grant if the state home allows VA to establish an outpatient clinic in the home.

House Bill

Section 406 of H.R. 5109 would clarify that establishment of an outpatient clinic in a state home would not constitute grounds entitling the United States to recover its grant.

Senate Bill

The Senate bills contain no comparable provision.

Compromise Agreement

Section 222 of the compromise agreement contains the House language.

SENSE OF CONGRESS CONCERNING COOPERATION
BETWEEN THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
AND THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE IN
THE PROCUREMENT OF MEDICAL ITEMS*Current Law*

Under the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Department of Defense (DOD) Health Resources Sharing and Emergency Operations Act, Public Law 97-174, VA and DOD have the authority to share medical resources. In 1999, VA and DOD entered into sharing agreements amounting to \$60 million dollars out of combined budgets of approximately \$35 billion. This is resource sharing of less than two-tenths of one percent. On May 25, 2000, the General Accounting Office reported that greater joint pharmaceutical procurements alone could lead to as much as \$345 million in annual recurring savings.

House Bill

H. Con. Res. 413 would encourage expanded joint procurement of medical items, to include prescription drugs.

Senate Bill

The Senate bills contain no comparable provision.

Compromise Agreement

Section 223 of the compromise agreement contains the House language.

Subtitle D—Construction Authorization
AUTHORIZATION OF MAJOR MEDICAL FACILITY
PROJECTS*Current Law*

Section 8104 of title 38, United States Code, provides that no funds may be appropriated for any fiscal year, and VA may not obligate or expend funds (other than for planning and design) for any medical construction project involving a total expenditure of more than \$4 million unless funds for that project have been specifically authorized by law.

House Bill

Section 201 of H.R. 5109 would authorize the construction of a gero-psychiatric care building at the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Palo Alto, California (\$26.6 million); the construction of a utility plant and electrical vault at the Department

of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Miami, Florida (\$23.6 million); and, seismic corrections, clinical consolidation and other improvements at the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Long Beach, California (\$51.7 million). Also, the House bill would authorize the renovation of psychiatric nursing units at the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Murfreesboro, Tennessee, using funds previously appropriated for this specific purpose (\$14 million).

Senate Bill

Section 301 of S. 1810 would authorize construction of a 120-bed gero-psychiatric facility at the Department of Veterans Affairs Palo Alto Health Care System, Menlo Park Division, California (\$26.6 million); and, construction of a nursing home at the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Beckley, West Virginia (\$9.5 million). In section 302 of S. 1810, the Senate would amend section 401 of the Veterans Millennium Health Care and Benefits Act of 1999, Public Law 106-117, to add as a seventh project authorized by that act for fiscal year 2000-2001 the Murfreesboro construction project (\$14 million).

Compromise Agreement

Section 231 of the compromise agreement incorporates each of the projects authorized by either body and includes specific authorization for the Murfreesboro project. Also, the compromise agreement provides that the authorizations for Palo Alto, Long Beach, and Beckley will be for 2 years, covering fiscal years 2001 and 2002, while the authorization for the Miami project will be only for fiscal year 2001. The compromise agreement also renews and extends the prior authorization of a project at the Lebanon, Pennsylvania VA Medical Center through the end of fiscal year 2002.

The Miami electrical plant and utility vault project is authorized only for fiscal year 2001. While the compromise agreement authorizes the project to proceed, we note that the current estimate to replace these facilities is \$32 million. Given this level of anticipated expenditure, the Committees urge the Secretary to examine innovative ways to reduce VA's outlay, at least on an initial basis. For example, the Committees note that the Miami facility is located in the midst of a very densely developed community of health and public safety-related institutions, including the Jackson Memorial Hospital and Metro-Dade police headquarters, among others. Given the need for such crucial institutions, including the VA medical center, to have dependable, stable, weather-proof and even fail-safe electrical sources, the Committees urge the Secretary to consider a "performance-based contract" for these services through the local utility (Florida Power and Light), or by consortium with multiple partners in need of similar improvements, assurances and security of utilities. At a minimum, the Secretary must carefully examine the reported cost of this project to ensure that it is being planned to meet known needs, rather than planned for the "highest possible use."

AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS

House Bill

The House bill (H.R. 5109, section 202) would authorize appropriations for fiscal years 2001 and 2002 of \$101.9 million for construction of the facilities authorized in section 201 thereof.

Senate Bill

S. 1810, section 303, would authorize appropriations for fiscal years 2001 and 2002 of \$36.1 million for construction of the facilities authorized in section 301. Also, section 303 al-

ters the authorization funding level of projects authorized in Public Law 106-117 by including the Murfreesboro project discussed above.

Compromise Agreement

Section 232 of the compromise agreement authorizes appropriations for the amounts indicated in each measure for these projects, affecting both fiscal year 2001 and fiscal year 2002, as follows:

[In millions of dollars]

<i>Authorizations</i>	<i>Amount authorized</i>
Beckley	\$9.5
Lebanon ¹	14.5
Long Beach	51.7
Miami ²	23.6
Murfreesboro	14.0
Palo Alto	26.6

¹Indicates authorization of appropriation in fiscal year 2002 only.

²Indicates authorization of appropriation in fiscal year 2001 only.

EXTENSION OF CONSTRUCTION AUTHORIZATION AT THE LEBANON, PENNSYLVANIA VA MEDICAL CENTER

Current Law

Section 401 of Public Law 106-117 (113 Stat. 1572) authorized a major construction project at the Lebanon, Pennsylvania, VA Medical Center. The project was authorized for fiscal year 2000 and fiscal year 2001.

House Bill

The House bills contain no comparable provision.

Senate Bill

The Senate bills contain no comparable provision.

Compromise Agreement

Section 232(a)(3) of the compromise agreement extends through fiscal year 2002 the prior authorization for construction of a long-term care facility at the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Lebanon, Pennsylvania, in an amount not to exceed \$14.5 million.

Subtitle E—Real Property Matters

CHANGE TO ENHANCED USE LEASE CONGRESSIONAL NOTIFICATION PERIOD

Current Law

Section 8163(c) of title 38, United States Code, requires the Secretary to notify Congress of VA's intention to pursue an enhanced-use lease of unused VA property, then wait a period of "60 legislative days" prior to proceeding with the specific lease objective(s). In the Veterans' Millennium Health Care Act, Public Law 106-117, Congress eased limits in law on leasing underused VA property based on a finding that long-term leasing could be used more extensively to enhance health care delivery to veterans.

House Bill

Section 407 of H.R. 5109 would amend the waiting period for VA notifications to Congress from 60 "legislative" days, to 90 "calendar" days. This change would shorten the length of time VA must wait before entering into an enhanced-use lease.

Senate Bill

The Senate bills contain no comparable provision.

Compromise Agreement

Section 241 of the compromise agreement contains the House language.

RELEASE OF REVERSIONARY INTEREST OF THE UNITED STATES IN CERTAIN REAL PROPERTY PREVIOUSLY CONVEYED TO THE STATE OF TENNESSEE

Current Law

In 1953, by Act of Congress (67 Stat. 54), the federal government transferred certain prop-

erty of the Veterans Administration (now Department of Veterans Affairs) in Johnson City (now Mountain Home), Tennessee, to the State of Tennessee, for use by the Army National Guard of the State of Tennessee. The act of transfer retained a reversionary interest in the land on the part of the government in the event that the State of Tennessee ceased to use the land as a training area for the guard and for "other military purposes." The land is no longer being used by the Tennessee National Guard and has no practical use by the government. Local municipal officials desire the land as a site for a public park and recreation area, and the State of Tennessee has made a commitment to transfer the land for these purposes but may not do so absent a recision of the federal government's reversionary interest in the property.

House Bill

Section 407 of H.R. 5109 would rescind the government's reversionary interest in the Tennessee property.

Senate Bill

The Senate bills contain no comparable provision.

Compromise Agreement

Section 242 of the compromise agreement contains the House language.

TRANSFER OF THE ALLEN PARK, MICHIGAN, VA MEDICAL CENTER TO FORD MOTOR LAND DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Current Law

In 1937, the Henry Ford family donated a 39-acre plot to VA expressly for the establishment of the Allen Park, Michigan VA Hospital. The conveyance provided that VA must return the land, in the same condition as it was received, if VA ceased to utilize it for veterans' health care. In 1996, VA activated a new VA Medical Center in Detroit.

House Bill

H.R. 5346 would transfer the land, the site of the former Allen Park, Michigan VA Medical Center, and all improvements thereon, to the Ford Motor Land Development Corporation, a subsidiary of Ford Motor Company. Having been replaced in 1996 by a new VA Medical Center in Detroit, the facility now is in disrepair. The bill would require up to 7 years of cooperation between VA and Ford in demolition, environmental cleanup (including remediation of hazardous material and environmental contaminants found on the site), and restoration of the property to its prior state. VA contributions would be limited to \$2 million per year over the period, and Ford would be responsible for any amount over VA's total contribution (\$14 million) required to complete the restoration. At the conclusion of restorative work, the Secretary would formally abandon the property, which would then revert to Ford Motor Land Development Corporation, in accordance with the reversionary clause contained in the original 1937 gift.

Senate Bill

The Senate bills contain no comparable provision.

Compromise Agreement

Section 243 of the compromise agreement contains the House language.

TRANSFER OF LAND AT THE CARL VINSON VA MEDICAL CENTER, DUBLIN, GEORGIA

Current Law

No provision.

House Bill

H.R. 5139 would convey to the Board of Regents of the State of Georgia two tracts of real property, including improvements, consisting of 39 acres at the Carl Vinson Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center,

Dublin, Georgia. The bill also conveys to the Community Service Board of Middle Georgia three tracts of property consisting of 58 acres, including improvements, at the Carl Vinson facility. The bill requires these properties be used in perpetuity for education or health care.

Senate Bill

The Senate bills contain no comparable provision.

Compromise Agreement

Section 244 of the compromise agreement contains the House language.

LAND CONVEYANCE OF MILES CITY, MONTANA
VETERANS AFFAIRS MEDICAL CENTER TO CUSTER COUNTY, MONTANA

Current Law

No provision.

Senate Bill

Section 312 of S. 1810 would transfer VA medical center facilities in Miles City, Montana, to Custer County, Montana, while authorizing VA to lease space in which VA would operate an outpatient clinic. Custer County would devote the transferred land to assisted living apartments for the elderly and to a number of other economic enhancement and community activity uses, including education and training courses through Miles Community College, a technology center, local fire department training, and use by the Montana Area Food Bank. VA, in turn, is relieved of the requirement to spend over \$500,000 per year maintaining a facility that is poorly suited to provide health care to the veterans of eastern Montana. VA would devote the saved funds to expanding Montana veterans' access to care by activating additional community based outpatient clinics in Montana.

House Bill

The House bills contain no comparable provision.

Compromise Agreement

Section 245 of the compromise agreement follows the Senate language. The compromise agreement anticipates that VA will work with the civic leadership of Custer County, Montana in order to identify potential improvements that may be reasonably necessary to effectuate the transfer of the Miles City property to Custer County. Also, the compromise agreement calls for the Secretary to determine to what extent it may be necessary to stipulate any conditions about the transfer, or conditions for VA's future use of this property, prior to the transfer of ownership of this property to Custer County. The compromise agreement further envisions funds appropriated to VA for non-recurring maintenance may be used, as authorized by law, to facilitate the transfer of VA's interest in the Miles City VA Medical Center to Custer County.

TRANSFER OF THE FORT LYON, COLORADO, VA
MEDICAL CENTER TO THE STATE OF COLORADO

Current Law

No provision.

Senate Bill

Sections 313 and 314 of S. 1810 would transfer the VA Medical Center, Ft. Lyon, Colorado to the State of Colorado for use by the State as a corrections facility. Under the terms of the bill, the conveyance would take place only when arrangements are made to protect the interests of affected patients and employees of the facility. With respect to patients, the bill would require VA to make alternate arrangements to ensure that appropriate medical care and nursing home care services continue to be provided, on the same basis that care had been provided at Ft. Lyon, to all veterans receiving such services

at the medical center. Under the bill, the VA would be authorized to provide care in community facilities at VA expense, notwithstanding other statutory limitations—e.g., title 38, United States Code, section 1720, which limits to 6 months the duration for which such care might be provided to veterans for nonservice-connected disabilities—or by state homes where VA would pay full costs and reimburse the veterans' share of copayments. Further, VA would be authorized to offer voluntary separation incentive payments to eligible employees of the Ft. Lyon VA medical center. In addition, the State would be required to allow public access to the Kit Carson Chapel located on the grounds of the VA medical center. And, finally, the VA would report on the status of the VA health care system in southern Colorado, not later than 1 year after the conveyance.

House Bill

The House bills contain no comparable provision.

Compromise Agreement

Sections 246 and 247 of the compromise agreement follow the Senate language, except for the provision extending VA's authority to offer voluntary separation incentive payments [subsection (c) of section 314 of S. 1810].

The inclusion of this language in this legislation should not be misconstrued as an erosion of, or acquiescence in, the requirement enacted in Public Law 106-117, the Veterans Millennium Health Care and Benefits Act of 1999, for VA to maintain VA-provided long-term care capacity at the 1998 level. VA continues to be obligated by law to ensure that the cumulative effect of its actions does not result in a reduction in VA's ability to provide institutional long-term care.

It should be noted that section 207 of this bill provides a 2-year extension of VA-wide authority to offer voluntary separation incentive payments to VA employees. The Committees find that the provision specifically granting the Fort Lyon facility a 1-year authority to offer voluntary separation incentive payments is redundant. Further, the Committees were concerned that retaining the Fort Lyon-specific provision in final legislation could have the unintended effect of limiting the 2-year, VA-wide buyout authority, granted in section 207, to 1 year when applied in the case of Fort Lyon. The Committees expect VA to use the authority granted in section 207, as an important human resources management tool, in its conveyance of the Fort Lyon facility.

TITLE III—COMPENSATION, INSURANCE,
HOUSING, EMPLOYMENT, AND MEMORIAL
AFFAIRS PROVISIONS

Subtitle A—Compensation Program Changes
PRESUMPTION OF SERVICE CONNECTION FOR
HEART ATTACK OR STROKE SUFFERED BY A
MEMBER OF A RESERVE COMPONENT IN THE
PERFORMANCE OF DUTY WHILE PERFORMING
INACTIVE DUTY TRAINING

Current Law

Under section 101(24) of title 38, United States Code, guardsmen and reservists who sustain an "injury" during inactive duty training are eligible for certain veterans' benefits, but are not eligible to receive disability compensation for a condition characterized as a "disease" that is incurred or aggravated during such training.

House Bill

Section 201(a) of H.R. 4850 would amend section 101(24) to include an acute myocardial infarction, a cardiac arrest, or a cerebrovascular accident resulting in disability or death and occurring during any period of inactive duty training for the purposes of service-connected benefits administered by VA.

Senate Bill

The Senate bills contain no comparable provision.

Compromise Agreement

Section 301 of the compromise agreement contains the House provision.

SPECIAL MONTHLY COMPENSATION FOR WOMEN
VETERANS WHO LOSE A BREAST AS A RESULT
OF A SERVICE-CONNECTED DISABILITY

Current Law

Section 1114(k) of title 38, United States Code, authorizes a special rate of compensation if a veteran, as the result of a service-connected disability, has suffered the anatomical loss or loss of use of one or more creative organs, or one foot, or one hand, or both buttocks, or blindness of one eye, having only light perception, or has suffered complete loss of the ability to speak, or deafness of both ears. The special monthly compensation is payable in addition to the compensation payable by reason of ratings assigned under the rating schedule.

House Bill

Section 202 of H.R. 4850 would amend section 1114(k) by making veterans eligible for special monthly compensation due to the service-connected loss of one or both breasts due to a radical mastectomy or modified radical mastectomy.

Senate Bill

Section 103 of S. 1810 would amend section 1114(k) by making female veterans eligible for special monthly compensation due to the loss of one or both breasts, including loss by mastectomy.

Compromise Agreement

Section 302 of the compromise agreement contains the Senate provision.

BENEFITS FOR PERSONS DISABLED BY PARTICIPATION
IN COMPENSATED WORK THERAPY PROGRAM

Current Law

Section 1151 of title 38, United States Code, provides compensation, under certain circumstances, to veterans who are injured as a result of VA health care or participation in VA vocational rehabilitation. Section 1718 of title 38, United States Code, authorizes the "Compensated Work Therapy Program (CWT)," which pays veterans to work in a variety of positions on contracts with governmental and industrial entities. CWT work is intended to be therapeutic by helping veterans re-enter the work force, enabling them to increase self-confidence and by improving their ability to adjust to the work setting. However, current law provides no mechanism to compensate CWT participants who may be injured as a result of participation.

House Bill

Section 402 of H.R. 5109 would allow VA to provide disability benefits under section 1151 to CWT participants injured while participating in this program.

Senate Bill

The Senate bills contain no comparable provision.

Compromise Agreement

Section 303 of the compromise agreement contains the House language.

REVISION TO LIMITATION ON PAYMENTS OF BENEFITS TO INCOMPETENT INSTITUTIONALIZED VETERANS

Current Law

Under section 5503 of title 38, United States Code, VA is prohibited from paying compensation and pension benefits to an incompetent veteran who has assets of \$1,500 or more if the veteran is being provided institutional care with or without charge by VA (or another governmental provider) and he or

she has no dependents. Such payments are restored if the veteran's assets drop to \$500 in value. If VA later determines that the veteran is competent for at least 6 months, the withheld payments are made in a lump sum.

Senate Bill

Section 205 of S. 1076 would repeal the limitation on benefit payments imposed by section 5503 of title 38, United States Code.

House Bill

The House bills contain no comparable provision.

Compromise Agreement

Under section 304 of the compromise agreement, the amount of resources that an incompetent veteran may retain and still qualify for payments is increased from \$1,500 to five times the benefit amount payable to a service-connected disabled veteran rated at 100 percent. If payments are withheld, they may be restored if the veteran's assets drop to one-half of that amount. The Committees expect that in notifying veterans and fiduciaries of the applicability of this requirement, VA will briefly indicate the assets that are counted or excluded in determining net worth. (See 38 C.F.R. §13.109)

REVIEW OF DOSE RECONSTRUCTION PROGRAM OF THE DEFENSE THREAT REDUCTION AGENCY

Current Law

VA provides service-connected compensation benefits to veterans who were exposed to ionizing radiation in service (due to participation in the occupation forces of Hiroshima or Nagasaki immediately after World War II, or in nuclear testing activities during the Cold War era) and who, subsequently, are diagnosed with the presumptive diseases listed in section 1112(c)(2) of title 38, United States Code. VA may also compensate radiation-exposed veterans with diseases not presumed to be service-connected if it determines that it is as likely as not that the disease is the result of exposure, taking into account the amount of exposure and the radiogenic properties of the disease; but VA utilizes dose reconstruction analysis provided by the Department of Defense to determine the estimated exposure.

Senate Bill

Section 171 of S. 1810 specifies that the Department of Defense (DOD) shall contract with the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) to carry out periodic reviews of the dose reconstruction program. NAS would review whether DOD's reconstruction of sampled doses is accurate, whether DOD assumptions regarding exposure based upon sampled doses are credible, and whether data from nuclear testing used by DOD in its reconstructions are accurate. The review would last 24 months and culminate in a report detailing NAS' findings and recommendations, if any, for a permanent review program.

House Bill

The House bills contain no comparable provision.

Compromise Agreement

Section 305 of the compromise agreement follows the Senate language.

Subtitle B—Life Insurance Matters PREMIUMS FOR TERM SERVICE DISABLED VETERANS' INSURANCE FOR VETERANS OLDER THAN AGE 70

Current Law

VA administers the Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance (SDVI) program under chapter 19 of title 38, United States Code. SDVI term policy premiums increase every 5 years to reflect the increased risk of death as individuals age.

Senate Bill

Section 131 of S. 1810 would cap premiums for SDVI term policies at the age 70 renewal rate.

House Bill

The House bills contain no comparable provision.

Compromise Agreement

Section 311 of the compromise agreement follows the Senate language with an amendment requiring VA to report to Congress, not later than September 30, 2001, on plans to liquidate the unfunded liability in the SDVI program not later than October 1, 2011.

INCREASE IN AUTOMATIC MAXIMUM COVERAGE UNDER SERVICEMEMBERS' GROUP LIFE INSURANCE AND VETERANS' GROUP LIFE INSURANCE

Current Law

The Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI) program provides up to \$200,000 in coverage to individuals on active duty in the Armed Forces, members of the Ready Reserves, the Commissioned Corps of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Public Health Service, cadets and midshipmen of the four service academies, and members of the Reserve Officer Training Corps. The maximum coverage of \$200,000 is automatically provided unless the service-member declines coverage or elects coverage at a reduced amount.

Senate Bill

Section 132 of S. 1810 would increase the maximum amount of coverage available through the SGLI program from \$200,000 to \$250,000.

House Bill

The House bills contain no comparable provision.

Compromise Agreement

Section 312 of the compromise agreement contains the Senate language.

ELIGIBILITY OF CERTAIN MEMBERS OF THE INDIVIDUAL READY RESERVE FOR SERVICEMEMBERS' GROUP LIFE INSURANCE

Current Law

Members of the Selected Reserve are eligible for enrollment in the Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI) program. Members of the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) are eligible for SGLI only when called to active duty.

Members of the IRR are currently eligible for Veterans Group Life Insurance, but only a small percentage participates.

House Bill

Section 301 of H.R. 4850 would provide those members of the IRR who are subject to involuntary call-up authority to enroll in the Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance program.

Senate Bill

The Senate bills contain no comparable provision.

Compromise Agreement

Section 313 of the compromise agreement contains the House language.

Subtitle C—Housing and Employment Programs

ELIMINATION OF REDUCTION IN ASSISTANCE FOR SPECIALLY ADAPTED HOUSING FOR DISABLED VETERANS HAVING JOINT OWNERSHIP OF HOUSING UNITS

Current Law

Under chapter 21 of title 38, United States Code, veterans with severe disabilities such as loss of ambulatory function are eligible for specially adapted housing grants of up to \$43,000 to finance the purchase or remodeling of housing units with special adaptations necessary to accommodate their disabilities. No particular form of ownership is specified in current law. Under regulations promulgated by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, co-ownership of the property by the veteran and an-

other person is not relevant to the amount of the grant if the co-owner is the veteran's spouse. If, however, the co-owner is a person other than the veteran's spouse, the maximum grant amount is reduced by regulation to reflect the veteran's partial ownership of the property interest, e.g., if the veteran jointly owns the property with one other person such as a sibling, the maximum grant is \$21,500. (See 38 C.F.R. §36.4403)

Senate Bill

Section 121 of S. 1810 would amend section 2102 of chapter 21 of title 38, United States Code, to allow VA to make non-reduced grants for specially adapted housing in cases where title to the housing unit is not vested solely in the veteran, if the veteran resides in the housing unit.

House Bill

The House bills contain no comparable provision.

Compromise Agreement

Section 321 of the compromise agreement contains the Senate language.

VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT EMPHASIS UNDER FEDERAL CONTRACTS FOR RECENTLY SEPARATED VETERANS

Current Law

Section 4212 of title 38, United States Code, requires that certain Federal contractors and subcontractors take affirmative action to employ and advance "special disabled veterans" (generally, veterans with serious employment handicaps or disability ratings of 30 percent or higher), Vietnam-era veterans, and other veterans who are "preference eligible" (generally, veterans who have served during wartime or in a campaign or expedition for which a campaign badge has been authorized).

Senate Bill

Section 151 of S. 1810 would add recently separated veterans (veterans who have been discharged or released from active duty within a 1-year period) to the definition of veterans to whom Federal contractors and subcontractors must extend affirmative action to employ and advance in employment.

House Bill

The House bills contain no comparable provision.

Compromise Agreement

Section 322 of the compromise agreement contains the Senate language.

EMPLOYERS REQUIRED TO GRANT LEAVE OF ABSENCE FOR EMPLOYEES TO PARTICIPATE AS HONOR GUARDS FOR FUNERALS OF VETERANS

Current Law

Section 4303(13) of title 38, United States Code, defines "service in the uniformed services," as the performance of duty on a voluntary or involuntary basis. Section 4316 defines the rights, benefits, and obligations of persons absent from employment for service in a uniformed service.

House Bill

H.R. 284 would add to the definition of "service in the uniformed services" a period for which a person is absent from employment for the purpose of performing funeral honors authorized duty under section 12503 of title 10, United States Code, or section 115 of title 32, United States Code. An employer would be required to grant an employee who is a member of a reserve component an authorized leave of absence from a position of employment to allow the employee to perform funeral duties. For purposes of intent to return to a position of employment with an employer, H.R. 284 would stipulate that an employee who takes an authorized leave of absence to perform funeral honors duty would be deemed to have notified the employer of the employee's intent to return to such position of employment.

Senate Bill

The Senate bills contain no comparable provision.

Compromise Agreement

Section 323 of the compromise agreement contains the House language.

Subtitle D—Cemeteries and Memorial Affairs

ELIGIBILITY OF CERTAIN FILIPINO VETERANS OF WORLD WAR II FOR INTERMENT IN NATIONAL CEMETERIES

Current Law

Section 2402(4) of title 38, United States Code, provides that eligibility for burial in any open VA national cemetery include any citizen of the United States who, during any war in which the United States is or has been engaged, served in the armed forces of any government allied with the United States during that war, and whose last such service terminated honorably.

Senate Bill

Section 141 of S. 1810 would amend section 2402(4) of title 38, United States Code, to provide for the eligibility of a Philippine Commonwealth Army veteran for burial in a national cemetery if, at the time of death, the Commonwealth Army veteran is a naturalized citizen of the United States, and he is a resident of the United States.

House Bill

The House bills contain no comparable provision.

Compromise Agreement

Section 331 of the compromise agreement follows the Senate language with an amendment requiring that the veteran be a citizen of, or lawfully admitted for permanent residence in, the United States, and be receiving compensation or be determined to have been eligible for pension had the veteran's service been deemed to be active military, naval, or air service.

PAYMENT RATE OF BURIAL BENEFITS FOR CERTAIN FILIPINO VETERANS OF WORLD WAR II

Current Law

Former members of the Philippine Commonwealth Army may qualify for VA disability compensation, burial benefits, and National Service Life Insurance benefits, and their survivors may qualify for dependency and indemnity compensation. These benefits are paid at one-half the rate they are provided to U.S. veterans. (See 38 U.S.C. §107).

Senate Bill

Section 201 of S. 1076 would authorize payment of the full-rate funeral expense and plot allowance to survivors of Philippine Commonwealth Army veterans who, at the time of death, (a) are citizens of the United States residing in the U.S. and (b) are receiving compensation for a service-connected disability or would have been eligible for VA pension benefits had their service been deemed to have been active military, naval, or air service.

House Bill

The House bills contain no comparable provision.

Compromise Agreement

Section 332 of the compromise agreement follows the Senate language with an amendment that as an alternate requirement to citizenship, permanent resident status would suffice for purposes of establishing eligibility.

PLOT ALLOWANCE FOR BURIAL IN STATE VETERANS' CEMETERIES

Current Law

Section 2303(b)(1) provides a plot allowance of \$150 for each veteran buried in a State-

owned veterans' cemetery, provided that only persons eligible for burial in a national cemetery are buried in that cemetery.

House Bill

The House bills contain no comparable provision.

Senate Bill

The Senate bills contain no comparable provision.

Compromise Agreement

Section 333 of the compromise agreement would allow a State to bury in a State veterans' cemetery members of the Armed Forces or former members discharged or released from service under conditions other than dishonorable—who are not otherwise eligible for burial in a national cemetery—without the State losing its eligibility for a plot allowance.

TITLE IV—OTHER MATTERS

BENEFITS FOR THE CHILDREN OF WOMEN VIETNAM VETERANS WHO SUFFER FROM CERTAIN BIRTH DEFECTS

Current Law

VA has authority to compensate veterans (including additional amounts of compensation for dependents) for service-connected disease or injury. VA may, pursuant to Public Law 104-204, provide benefits to children of Vietnam veterans born with "all forms and manifestations" of spina bifida except spina bifida occulta. Children with spina bifida born of Vietnam veterans currently are eligible for (1) a monthly allowance, varying by degree of disability of the person with spina bifida, (2) health care for any disability associated with that person's spina bifida, and (3) vocational training, job placement, and post-job placement services.

Senate Bill

Section 162 of S. 1810 would extend (with a single variation) to the children born with birth defects to women Vietnam veterans the same benefits as those now afforded to Vietnam veterans' children born with spina bifida under chapter 18 of title 38, United States Code.

House Bill

The House bills contain no comparable provision.

Compromise Agreement

Section 401 of the compromise agreement generally follows the Senate language. The former chapter 18 has been redesignated as subchapter I, the compromise agreement from section 401 of S. 1810 has been designated as subchapter II of chapter 18 and certain general definitional and administrative provisions applicable to both subchapters I and II of chapter 18 have been placed in a new subchapter III.

The definition of "child" in the Senate bill has been moved to a general definitions section (new section 1821) contained in subchapter III. A separate definition of "eligible child" (for purposes of subchapter II) has been provided in a new section 1811. The definition of "female Vietnam veteran" contained in S. 1810 has been removed from subchapter II and replaced by general definitions of Vietnam veteran and Vietnam era in new section 1821.

S. 1810 would have excluded spina bifida from the definition of a covered birth defect in subchapter II. Thus, the Senate bill could have been interpreted so as to require a child to choose to receive a monthly monetary allowance and health care based only on spina bifida or based only on non-spina bifida disabilities, but not both. Because the Committees wish to include spina bifida with all other covered disabilities for purposes of rating the disabilities from which an eligible child may suffer, the prohibition in proposed

section 1812(b)(2) has been deleted from the compromise bill. The compromise agreement is intended to ensure that children of women Vietnam veterans who suffer both from spina bifida and any other covered birth defect will have all of their disabilities considered in determining the appropriate disability rating and the amount of monetary benefits to be paid under subchapter II of chapter 18. If the only covered birth defect present is spina bifida, the eligible child would be compensated under the spina bifida provisions of subchapter I of chapter 18.

The requirement in S. 1810 that birth defects identified by the Secretary be listed in regulations has been omitted. In drafting this legislation, the Committees considered the report of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration, Environmental Epidemiology Service, entitled "Women Vietnam Veterans Reproductive Outcomes Health Study" (October, 1998). Because this report identifies a wide variety of birth defects identified in the children of women Vietnam veterans, the Committees concluded that it was not necessary to provide a rating for each separate defect. Thus, the Committees intend that, in addition to whatever specific defects the Secretary may identify, the Secretary may also describe defects in generic terms, such as "a congenital muscular impairment resulting in the inability to stand or walk without assistive devices." Language authorizing the Secretary to take into account functional limitations when formulating a schedule for rating disabilities under the new subchapter was added to specifically allow for ratings based upon generic descriptions of functional limitations imposed by the disabilities.

The limitation contained in the Senate bill which barred assistance under the new authority to an individual who qualified for spina bifida benefits has been deleted to assure that children who suffer from spina bifida and any other covered defect may receive a monetary allowance under subchapter II and health care which takes into account the disabilities imposed by spina bifida and any other condition.

EXTENSION OF CERTAIN EXPIRING AUTHORITIES

Current Law

The following authorities expire on September 30, 2002: (1) VA's authority to verify the eligibility of recipients of, or applicants for, VA needs-based benefits and VA means-tested medical care by gaining access to income records of the Department of Health and Human Services/Social Security Administration and the Internal Revenue Service, (2) the reduction to \$90 per month for VA pension and death pension benefits to veterans or other beneficiaries without dependents who are receiving Medicaid-covered nursing home care, (3) the Secretary's authority to charge borrowers who obtain VA-guaranteed, insured or direct home loans a "home loan" fee, and (4) procedures applicable to liquidation sales of defaulted home loans guaranteed by VA. The Secretary's (enhanced loan asset) authority to issue and guarantee securities representing an interest in home loans expires on December 31, 2002.

House Bill

Section 8 of H.R. 4268 would extend temporary authorities to 2008 that would otherwise expire on September 30, 2002, including: (1) VA income verification authority through which VA verifies the eligibility for VA needs-based benefits and VA means-tested medical care, by gaining access to income records of the Department of Health and Human Services/Social Security Administration and the Internal Revenue Service, (2) limitation on VA pension and death pension payments to beneficiaries without dependents receiving Medicaid-covered nursing

home care, (3) VA-enhanced loan asset authority guaranteeing the payment of principal and interest on VA-issued certificates or other securities, VA home loan fees of ¾ of one percent of the total loan amount, and (4) procedures applicable to liquidation sales on defaulted home loans guaranteed by VA.

Senate Bill

The Senate bills contain no comparable provision.

Compromise Agreement

Section 402 of the compromise agreement contains the House language.

PRESERVATION OF CERTAIN REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Current Law

The Federal Reports Elimination and Sunset Act of 1995 repealed a number of agency report requirements that Congress had imposed during the 20th century. The effect of that law, which otherwise would have taken effect last year, was temporarily suspended until May 15, 2000, by a provision in last year's omnibus appropriations act, Public Law 106-113.

House Bill

Section 10 of H.R. 4268 would reinstate the requirements that the Secretary provide periodic reports concerning equitable relief granted by the Secretary to an individual beneficiary (expires December 31, 2004); work and activities of the Department; programs and activities examined by the Advisory Committees on a) former prisoners of war (expires December 31, 2003) and b) women veterans (expires after biennial reports submitted in 2004); operation of the Montgomery GI Bill educational assistance program (expires December 31, 2004); and activities of the Secretary's special medical advisory group (expires December 31, 2004). It also requires the Secretary to include with any report that is required by law or by a joint explanatory statement of a Congressional conference committee an estimate of the cost of preparing the report.

Senate Bill

The Senate bills contain no comparable provision.

Compromise Agreement

Section 403 of the compromise agreement contains the House language.

LEGISLATIVE PROVISIONS NOT ADOPTED

EXPANSION OF LIST OF DISEASES PRESUMED TO BE SERVICE-CONNECTED FOR RADIATION-EXPOSED VETERANS

Current Law

Section 1112(c)(2) of title 38, United States Code, lists 16 diseases which, if they become manifest in a radiation-exposed veteran at any time in his or her lifetime, would be considered to have been incurred in or aggravated during active service.

Senate Bill

Section 102 of S. 1810 would amend section 1112(c)(2) by adding lung cancer, colon cancer, tumors of the brain and central nervous system, and ovarian cancer to the list of diseases presumed to be service-connected if they are contracted by radiation-exposed veterans.

House Bill

The House bills contain no comparable provision.

INCREASE IN MAXIMUM AMOUNT OF HOUSING LOAN GUARANTEE

Current Law

Under section 3703(a)(1)(A)(IV) of title 38, United States Code, VA guarantees 25 percent of a home loan amount for loans of more than \$144,000, with a maximum guar-

anty of \$50,750. Under current mortgage loan industry practices, a loan guaranty of \$50,750 is sufficient to allow a veteran to borrow up to \$203,000 toward the purchase of a home with no down payment.

Senate Bill

Section 122 of S. 1810 would amend section 3703(a)(1) to increase the maximum amount of the VA guaranty from \$50,750 to \$63,175.

House Bill

The House bills contain no comparable provision.

TERMINATION OF COLLECTION OF LOAN FEES FROM VETERANS RATED ELIGIBLE FOR COMPENSATION AT PRE-DISCHARGE RATING EXAMINATIONS

Current Law

Section 3729(c) of title 38, United States Code, provides that a loan fee may not be collected from a veteran who is receiving disability compensation (or who, but for the receipt of retirement pay, would be entitled to receive compensation) or from a surviving spouse of any veteran who died from a service-connected disability (including a person who died in the active military, naval, or air service).

Senate Bill

Section 123 of S. 1810 would amend section 3729 to add an additional category of fee-exempt borrower; persons who have been evaluated by VA prior to discharge from military service and who are expected to qualify for a compensable service-connected disability upon discharge, but who are not yet receiving disability compensation because they are still on active duty.

House Bill

The House bills contain no comparable provision.

FAMILY COVERAGE UNDER SERVICEMEMBERS' GROUP LIFE INSURANCE

Current Law

Spouses and dependent children are not eligible for any VA-administered insurance program.

Senate Bill

Section 133 of S. 1810 would create a new section 1967A within chapter 19 of title 38, United States Code. This section would provide to SGLI-insured servicemembers an opportunity to provide for coverage of their spouses and children. The amount of coverage for a spouse would be equal to the coverage of the insured servicemember, up to a maximum of \$50,000. The lives of an insured servicemembers' dependent children would be insured for \$5,000.

House Bill

The House bills contain no comparable provision.

COMPTROLLER GENERAL AUDIT OF VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Current Law

Not applicable.

Senate Bill

Section 152 of S. 1810 would require the Comptroller General of the United States to carry out a comprehensive audit of the Veterans' Employment and Training Service of the Department of Labor. The audit would commence not earlier than January 1, 2001, and would be completed not later than 1 year after enactment of this provision. Its purpose would be to provide a basis for future evaluations of the effectiveness of the Service in meeting its mission. The audit would review the requirements applicable to the Service under law, evaluate the organizational structure of the Service, and any other matters related to the Service that the Comptroller General considers appropriate.

House Bill

The House bills contain no comparable provision.

ACCELERATED PAYMENTS OF BASIC EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE

Current Law

Current law does not provide for accelerated educational assistance payments in VA-administered education programs.

Senate Bill

Section 9 of S. 1402 would authorize VA to make accelerated payments under the terms of regulations that VA would promulgate to allow MGIB participants to receive a semester's, a quarter's, or a term's worth of benefits at the beginning of the semester, quarter, or term. For courses not so organized, VA could make an accelerated payment up to a limit established by VA regulation, not to exceed the cost of the course.

House Bill

The House bills contain no comparable provision.

ELIGIBILITY OF MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES TO WITHDRAW ELECTIONS NOT TO RECEIVE MONTGOMERY GI BILL BASIC EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE

Current Law

Sections 3011(c)(1) (for active duty service of at least 3 years) and 3012(d)(1) (for active duty service of 2 years and 4 continuous years in the Selected Reserve) of title 38, United States Code, provide that any servicemember may make an election not to receive educational assistance under chapter 30 of title 38, United States Code. Any such election shall be made at the time the individual initially enters active duty. For servicemembers who elect to sign up for the Montgomery GI Bill, section 3011(b) requires a pay reduction of \$100 per month for the first 12 months of active service.

Senate Bill

Section 8 of S. 1402 would authorize servicemembers who had "opted out" of MGIB participation (by electing not to receive MGIB benefits and whose basic pay during the first 12 months of service, therefore, had not been reduced by \$100 per month for 12 months) to regain eligibility for MGIB benefits by making a \$1,500 lump sum payment.

House Bill

The House bills contain no comparable provision.

CODIFICATION OF RECURRING PROVISIONS IN ANNUAL DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS APPROPRIATIONS ACTS

Current Law

Each year the Congress appropriates funds to the Department of Veterans Affairs as part of the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, Independent Agencies Appropriations Act (VA-HUD appropriations bill). Although the amount of the appropriations varies from year to year, the purposes for which appropriations are made are generally fixed, and change little, if any, from year to year. Because the style of appropriations language discourages normal punctuation or sentence structure, some of the "sentences" making appropriations exceed a page in length. This approach appears to make the appropriations language difficult for the average person to read.

House Bill

Section 9 of H.R. 4268 would codify recurring provisions in annual Department of Veterans Affairs Appropriations Acts.

Senate Bill

The Senate bills contain no comparable provision.

MAJOR CONSTRUCTION PROJECT AT THE BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS HEALTH CARE SYSTEM: INTEGRATION OF THE BOSTON, WEST ROXBURY, AND BROCKTON VA MEDICAL CENTERS

Current Law

No provision.

House Bill

The House bills contain no comparable provision.

Senate Bill

The Senate bills contain no comparable provision.

Compromise Agreement

The Committees take note of concerns registered by Members of both Houses over the pace and poor planning associated with an important project in the greater Boston VA environment. The most recent information on the Boston integration indicates that a new review—by the Capital Assets Restructuring For Enhanced Services (CARES) contractor for New England—will begin soon. The Committees expect VA to complete the Boston integration plan in an expedited manner. Further, the Committees expect the VA to submit a proposal, or a major construction authorization request, to address these infrastructure needs following completion of the CARES validation of bed need in the area. The Committees support this process and look forward to the results of the analysis and any proposal VA consequently may make.

PILOT PROGRAM FOR COORDINATION OF HOSPITAL BENEFITS

Current Law

No provision.

House Bill

Section 401 of H.R. 5109 would authorize a four-site VA pilot program. Under the program, veterans with Medicare or private health coverage (and a number of indigent veterans), who rely on a VA community-based clinic, could voluntarily choose nearby community hospital care for brief episodes of medical-surgical inpatient care. The VA clinic would coordinate care and cover required copayments.

Senate Bill

The Senate bills contain no comparable provision.

UNIFICATION OF MEDICATION COPAYMENTS

Current Law

Under Section 1710(a)(2)(G) of title 38, United States Code, VA provides medical care, without imposing an obligation to make copayments for such care, to veterans who are "unable to defray the expenses of necessary care. . . ." This is determined by comparing the veteran's annual income against an income threshold that is adjusted annually. A separate provision of law, section 1722A of title 38, United States Code, mandates that VA charge a copayment for each 30-day supply of prescription medications provided to a veteran on an outpatient basis if that medication is for the treatment of a nonservice-connected condition.

Two categories of veterans are exempt from the copayment obligation: veterans who have service-connected disability ratings of 50 percent or higher, and veterans whose annual income does not exceed the maximum amount of "means tested" VA pension that would be payable if such veterans were to qualify for pension. Eligibility for pension is also determined by calculating countable income against an income threshold. This pension level is lower than the health care eligibility income threshold. As a consequence, veterans who are given priority access to VA health care and are exempted from making copayments for that

health care under one measurement of their means are required to make copayments for medications under a different measurement of their means.

Senate Bill

Section 201 of S. 1810 would unify the copayment exemption thresholds at the health care eligibility income threshold.

House Bill

The House bills contain no comparable provision.

EXTENSION OF MAXIMUM TERM OF VA LEASES TO PROVIDERS OF HOMELESS VETERANS SERVICES

Current Law

VA's Home Loan Guaranty Program assists veterans by facilitating their purchase, construction, and improvement of homes. VA does so by encouraging private lenders to extend favorable credit terms to veterans by guaranteeing repayment of a portion of the lender-provided home loan.

In some circumstances, veterans default on mortgage loans guaranteed by VA. In such cases, the lender will foreclose, and VA, as a guarantor, may come into possession of the property. Such properties, typically, are sold to the public by VA. VA, however, has the option of leasing such properties to public and nonprofit private providers of services to homeless veterans so that such service-providers may offer shelter and other services to homeless veterans and their families. However, such leases to the providers of services to homeless veterans may not exceed 3 years in term.

Senate Bill

Section 311 of S. 1810 would extend the maximum term of VA leases to providers of services to homeless veterans from 3 to 20 years.

House Bill

The House bills contain no comparable provision.

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, as the ranking member of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, I urge my colleagues to support this comprehensive bill which would make changes to a wide range of veterans's benefits and services. The bill represents compromise on both sides of the aisle and in both Houses of Congress, and many, many hours of staff and Members' work. For that, I thank everyone involved.

The bill covers a wide spectrum of issues—from new educational benefits for service members to improvement in VA nurses' and dentists' pay. I would like to address some of the major provisions.

Mr. President, S. 1402, as amended, represents a comprehensive effort to address the shortfall in the amount provided for veterans' education. The current basic GI Bill benefit is \$536 per month, which, according to College Board data, pays for less than 60 percent of the costs of a public four-year university. The cost of tuition and fees for public and private educational institutions rose approximately 90 percent from 1980–1995, while the MGIB benefit rates only increased 42 percent from 1985 to 1995. S. 1402 will provide an increase for fiscal year 2001 of 22 percent, raising the basic rate to \$650 per month.

Additionally, this compromise bill adopts a Senate "buy up" provision

that will allow servicemembers to elect to contribute up to an additional \$600 (above the \$1,200 that they contribute over their first year of service), in exchange for receiving four times their contribution. This additional contribution can be made at any time prior to the servicemember leaving service. Thus, it is targeted at those who definitely plan to pursue additional education when they leave service.

Although these increases fall short of the full tuition recommended last year by the Commission on Servicemembers and Veterans Transition Assistance, they will nevertheless provide a substantial improvement in assistance to veterans. The basic monthly benefit increase to \$650, when combined with the maximum "buy up" contribution, would yield a monthly benefit of \$800 per month, an increase of 49 percent over the current benefit.

I believe that education is the key to success in today's high tech, fast-paced economy. We must ensure that our nation's veterans do not wind up on the wrong side of the "digital divide." It should be our policy to always encourage servicemembers and veterans to strive for greater achievement. Aside from the benefits that accrue to the individual veteran, we cannot overlook the benefits that accrue to our Nation when we provide a substantial educational benefit to veterans, including increased tax dollars from better salaries, greater stability through higher levels of home ownership rates, and a stronger recruiting tool for future servicemembers.

We also must remember our commitment to take care of the families of servicemembers killed on duty and families of veterans who are totally disabled due to their service. S. 1402 provides a corresponding increase in the monthly educational benefit, Dependents' Educational Assistance (DEA), provided to survivors and dependents of these veterans. Part of the reason that DEA is so low when compared to MGIB is that the MGIB rate has been indexed to the inflation rate, while the DEA has not. That is why it was so important to me that we index DEA, as section 111 of S. 1402 provides. This will ensure that the education benefit to eligible dependents and survivors will keep pace with the cost of education and MGIB benefits.

Last year, we expanded VA's authority to provide education benefits to veterans by including payment for pre-admission exam preparatory courses (SATs, GREs, etc). This year, through section 114, we are extending this valuable benefit to the eligible survivors and dependents of veterans through DEA. At some of the nation's top schools, scores on entrance exams can count for half of the total application, creating enormous pressure to score well. Studies by national consulting companies have shown improvement of over 100 points on the SAT exam scores for students who take exam preparatory courses. However, many of

these exam preparatory course are quite costly. One national provider charges as much as \$750 for a two-month, part-time, SAT preparatory course. Fairtest, an educational advocacy group, argues that "[t]he SAT has always favored students who can afford coaching over those who cannot. . . ." To be able to compete, it is critical that veterans' survivors and dependents have access to such courses.

Last year, along with Senator MURRAY and Senator DASCHLE, I introduced legislation that will provide much needed benefits to the children born with birth defects to female Vietnam veterans. I am enormously pleased that this legislation has been incorporated in S. 1402.

Section 401 will provide health care and compensation to children born with permanently disabling birth defects to women Vietnam veterans. The legislation had its inception in a comprehensive study the VA conducted of long-term reproductive health outcomes of women Vietnam-era veterans. After analyzing the records of over 4,000 women Vietnam veterans compared with 4,000 women Vietnam-era veterans, the study found a "statistically significant increase in birth defects," particularly moderate to severe birth defects, in the children of the women Vietnam veterans. According to the study, the risk to a woman Vietnam veteran of having a child with birth defects was significantly elevated, even after adjusting for age, demographic variables, military characteristics, and smoking and alcohol consumption of the mothers.

As VA does not have the authority under current law to provide health care or their benefits to the children of women Vietnam veterans disabled from birth defects other than spinal bifida, I worked with VA to craft legislation modeled after that groundbreaking spina bifida legislation to address this issue.

It is only fitting that we assist these children. Their mothers served our Nation with honor and courage, volunteering to be placed in harm's way, without knowledge of what effects their service may bring later. They were the nurses, mapmakers, air traffic controllers, clerical staff, Red Cross and USO workers, and others who supported our troops in the field. Unfortunately, some of their children have suffered because of their mothers' service, and it is time for them to begin to be repaid for that suffering.

Under the provisions of S. 1402, VA would be authorized to provide reimbursement for health care of the disabled children for their birth defect and associated conditions, vocational rehabilitation services, and a monthly allowance that is not countable as income for the purpose of other federal programs.

Women Vietnam veterans have waited 25 years for this acknowledgment of the special risks they faced. Helping their children born with birth defects

is the logical extension of our policy to provide benefits for disabilities that result from service. It's the compassionate and the right thing to do, and I am enormously gratified that we are finally doing it.

S. 1402 contains a number of benefits provisions that will aid veterans.

Section 301 extends compensation to be paid to reservists on inactive duty for training who were disabled or died from heart attack or stroke during training or travel to/from training. Currently, guards members and reservists who sustain an injury during inactive duty for training are eligible for veterans benefits. However, they are not eligible to receive compensation for diseases incurred or aggravated during such training, while active duty servicemembers would be eligible for the same condition. This provision recognizes the special nature of strokes and heart attacks and how they may be triggered by the additional physical stress during inactive duty for training, and ensures that these servicemembers and their families will be taken care of.

Section 302 will provide special monthly compensation to female veterans who have lost a breast due to service-connected conditions. Special monthly compensation is an additional monthly monetary benefit provided above regular compensation for loss, or loss of use of a part of a veterans' body, that yields an additional disability that another loss would not, such as loss of sight or hearing, loss of use of the veterans' legs, or loss of a creative organ. The loss of a breast to a woman veteran is consistent with the other disabilities where special monthly compensation is provided.

I am very pleased that S. 1402 closes the final chapter on a 55-year-old injustice—the cause of Filipino veterans who fought under U.S. Command during World War II. When the decision to extend benefits to this group was initially made, the law authorized payments to Filipino veterans at the rate of 50 cents on the dollar of the amounts that American veterans receive. It is my understanding that the VA-HUD Appropriations bill will contain a provision that will provide full compensation benefits and extend health care to these Filipino veterans. Section 332 of S. 1402 will extend full burial benefits to the dependents of Filipino veterans, while section 331 will provide that Filipino veterans who are American citizens and in the U.S. at the time of their death can be buried in National Cemeteries. This is a long overdue correction of an old injustice.

I am enormously proud of the fact that S. 1402 includes a small provision that I introduced which removes the limit on adaptive housing grants to disabled veterans who own their home with someone other than a spouse.

I became aware that there was a problem with the adaptive housing regulations when I was contacted by the family of Darren Frederick, a West

Virginia Gulf War veteran who lost his ability to walk when he developed ALS, also known as Lou Gehrig's disease. Darren owned a house with his brother and applied for a grant from VA to adapt his home for his wheelchair. But because he owned the house with someone other than a spouse, VA regulations required that the grant be reduced by half. Still, this young, disabled veteran needed a whole ramp, not half a ramp, into his home.

The regulation VA was applying was written in 1947 to protect veterans from unscrupulous people who might take advantage of them. However, I am certain that this provision has hurt far more people than it has helped. That is why I pushed to eliminate it, and am pleased to say that it is no longer going to be the law. Unfortunately, I am sad to say that this change came too late to help young Darren Frederick. Darren passed away while he was still dealing with the red tape caused by this provision.

I am very disappointed that last year we were unable to move the Senate provision overturning the "\$1,500 rule." Since 1933, the law has required VA to suspend the compensation or pension benefits of incompetent veterans who have no dependents and are hospitalized at government expense. This suspension is triggered when the veteran's estate (basically, his bank account) exceeds \$1,500, and continues until the estate is spent down to \$500. At that time, VA reinstates the veteran's compensation until the veteran is hospitalized again and the estate exceeds \$1,500, when the benefits are cut off again. No similar suspension is made for competent veterans or for incompetent veterans who are not hospitalized or who have dependents.

The rationale for cutting off benefits was that these veterans might have been institutionalized for years, and that it was not good policy to allow their estates to build up when they have no dependents to inherit them. There was also a fear of fraud on the part of the veteran's guardian or fiduciary.

Today, veterans are generally being hospitalized for shorter periods of time, but even so, the rule often applies quickly because of the outdated low dollar limit. It takes VA an average of 66 days to restore the benefits to incompetent veterans once their estates have been spent down. The result is that a veteran may have been released from the hospital for quite some time before the benefit is restored, creating great hardships in paying for the expenses of daily living.

The dollar amounts of the limit have not changed since 1933, when \$1,500 equaled almost three years' worth of VA benefits at a 100 percent rating level. In today's dollars, this is less than one month's benefit at a 100 percent rating level. Although I truly believe that this is an outdated and indefensible policy that discriminates against incompetent veterans—veterans who are least likely to be able to

fight for themselves—we remain unable to fully eliminate the restriction, as I wish we could. However, we are doing the next best thing—raising the limits to a more realistic dollar amount and indexing it to account for future increases in compensation. Section 304 provides that the \$1,500 will be replaced with the dollar value represented by five times the 100-percent service-connected compensation rate, and that amount will be indexed to include future cost-of-living adjustments. If we can't eliminate this type of discrimination, I am gratified that we could at least reduce its application and impact.

I am especially pleased that this legislation includes authorization for the construction of a \$9.5 million nursing home in Beckley, West Virginia. With the World War II and Korean War veteran population aging, there is an increased demand for an alternative to private long-term care, which is often costly and beyond the reach of many veterans and their families. I fought so hard for this federally funded facility because it will be available to all veterans in need of care, regardless of income. It will also contain a 20-bed Alzheimer's unit, to meet the special needs of those suffering from this horrible disease. Long-term care for Alzheimer's patients is very limited in southern West Virginia, and the Beckley VA Medical Center must often send veterans outside the state for this specialized care. Quality long-term care for West Virginia veterans is long overdue.

Currently, the Senate is deliberating on a bill that would appropriate \$1 million in design funds for this project. I am hopeful that we will get the full amount needed for completion of the facility in the near future.

I am very proud of the nurses' pay provision in section 201 of S. 1402, which finally gives a very valued segment of VA's health care staff their due. Since the inception of the locality pay system in 1990, which determined the rate of pay for nurses according to trends in local health care labor markets, only some nurses in the VA system nationwide have actually seen pay increases. This was an unjust consequence of implementing the locality pay system that I am very glad we can now rectify.

This bill prohibits directors from reducing nurses' pay, and guarantees VA nurses a national comparability increase equivalent to that provided to other federal employees. Additionally, it reforms the local labor market survey process currently used to determine wages. Finally, I am pleased that this provision also requires Veterans Health Administration network directors to consult directly with nurses on policy issues that involve the work of VA nurses, and allows registered nurses to participate on medical center committees considering clinical care, budget matters, or resource allocation involving the care and treatment of veteran patients.

Section 202, the dentists' pay provision of S. 1402, is one that I am very satisfied with as it seeks to improve the recruitment and retention of dentists within the VA, and, therefore, the level of dental care our veterans receive as well. The basic pay rates of dentists employed in the VHA are supplemented by special pay and incentive pay scales that were originally enacted with the intent of helping recruitment and retention rates. However, they were not sufficient enough to keep this vital sector of veterans' care secured. This bill will build on what was already started nearly 10 years ago by finally revising and increasing the rates of special pay for VA dentists.

Another important provision in this legislation that I am very proud of is the creation of a physician assistant advisory position within the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). This position will finally give voice to a very essential segment of the VA health care system.

Current law requires that the office of Under Secretary for Health in the VA include representatives of a variety of health care professions. However, despite the fact that the VA is the nation's largest single employer of physician assistants, physician assistants have not had any representation within this office.

That is why I am pleased to be able to provide these often underrated health care workers with their own representative advisor. The VA Under Secretary for Health will designate a VHA physician assistant to fill this position and charge that person with advising on all matters regarding the employment and use of physician assistants within the Veterans Health Administration. The advisor may be assigned out in the field with periodical visits as necessary to VHA headquarters for reports, so that they are able to keep in touch both with physician assistants working all over the country and the VA Under Secretary for Health in VA Headquarters. The language associated with this section specifically calls upon VA to provide this individual with the necessary support and resources to enable this consultant to fulfill the assigned responsibilities of this position.

Just over 15 years ago, the VA conducted a large-scale survey on the occurrence of PTSD and other psychological problems in Vietnam veterans. The study found that 15 percent of male veterans and 8.5 percent of female veterans suffered from PTSD. However, among those veterans exposed to higher levels of war zone stress, PTSD rates were significantly higher. In addition, the study found that nearly one-third of both male and female Vietnam veterans had suffered from PTSD at some point following military service.

Therefore, I am very gratified that this bill provides for a followup study to be conducted to monitor the effectiveness of the PTSD programs and other psychiatric services the VA has

provided over the years to help veterans cope with the symptoms of this debilitating disorder. The study is to be conducted by an independent contractor, but the VA is being encouraged to design the study protocol itself in order to secure high quality responses to the survey.

Mr. President, in closing, I want to acknowledge the work of our Committee's Chairman, Senator SPECTER, in developing this comprehensive legislation. Through his efforts, and that of his staff—Bill Turek, Staff Director; Chris Yoder, Assistant Staff Director; and Legislative Assistants Jon Tower and William Cahill, we are moving this significant piece of legislation today.

I appreciate the willingness of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, especially Chairman BOB STUMP and Ranking Member LANE EVANS, to work together to reach compromise on so many vital issues.

And I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the efforts of my own staff: Jim Gottlieb, Minority Staff Director; Kim Lipsky, Professional Staff Member; and Mary Schoelen, Counsel. I am enormously grateful for their diligence, and for their commitment to the work we do in this Committee on behalf of our Nation's veterans.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, the amendment (No. 4314) is agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate concurs in the amendment of the House to the title of the bill with an amendment.

The title of the bill was amended so as to read: "An Act to amend title 38, United States Code, to increase the rates of educational assistance under the Montgomery GI Bill, to improve procedures for the adjustment of rates of pay for nurses employed by the Department of Veterans Affairs, to make other improvements in veterans educational assistance, health care, and benefits programs, and for other purposes."

VETERANS' COMPENSATION COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENT ACT OF 2000

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Veterans' Affairs Committee be discharged from further consideration of H.R. 4850 and the Senate then proceed to its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 4850) to provide a cost-of-living adjustment in rates of compensation paid to veterans with service-connected disabilities, to enhance programs providing compensation and life insurance benefits for veterans, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.