



T H E M I L I T A R Y C O A L I T I O N

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February 8, 2008

The Honorable Ike Skelton
Committee on Armed Services
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The Military Coalition (TMC), a consortium of uniformed services and veterans associations representing more than 5.5 million current and former servicemembers and their families and survivors, is writing to urge further action this year on upgrading the reserve retirement system to reflect the realities of “operational reserve” service in the 21st century.

TMC appreciates that Congress recognized the need for change in the FY 2008 National Defense Authorization Act by establishing prospective authority for currently serving reservists to retire three months earlier for each 90 days of qualifying active duty service. But the Coalition was very disappointed that the new law change excluded such early retirement credit for the extraordinary service and sacrifice already offered by hundreds of thousands of National Guard and Reserve members activated in the Global War on Terror, including more than 150,000 with multiple active duty tours.

TMC strongly recommends that the Armed Services Committee at a minimum favorably report Rep. Joe Wilson’s H.R. 4930, ‘National Guardsmen and Reservists Parity for Patriots Act,’ which would make the new authority retroactive to September 11, 2001.

Today’s “operational reserve” forces are essential to every national security mission at home and overseas. The nation asks these service members and their families to make enormous sacrifices that take them away from their families, communities and civilian careers more and more frequently. The reserve retirement system was built over 60 years ago when routine activations for the full range of operations were unimaginable. To optimize retention and readiness outcomes and to be fairer to our reserve warriors, the system must be overhauled.

TMC also believes strongly that ultimate reform of the reserve retirement system should include access to military healthcare for these warriors. We believe the government should not undermine Guard and Reserve families’ health coverage continuity by cutting off TRICARE eligibility once a member has completed career service but has not attained age 60. TMC understands that such interim coverage would have to entail a higher beneficiary premium.

TMC strongly supports H.R. 4930 and urges that you incorporate it into the FY 2009 National Defense Authorization Act.

Sincerely,

The Military Coalition
(signatures enclosed)

Air Force Association
Air Force Sergeants Association
Air Force Women Officers Associated
American Logistics Association
AMVETS (American Veterans)
Army Aviation Association of America
Association of Military Surgeons of the United States
Association of the United States Army
Chief Warrant Officer and Warrant Officer Association, U.S. Coast Guard
Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service, Inc.
Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States
Fleet Reserve Association
Gold Star Wives of America, Inc.
Jewish War Veterans of the United States of America
Marine Corps League
Marine Corps Reserve Association
Military Chaplains Association of the United States of America
Military Officers Association of America
Military Order of the Purple Heart
National Association for Uniformed Services
National Military Family Association
National Order of Battlefield Commissions
Naval Enlisted Reserve Association
Naval Reserve Association
Non Commissioned Officers Association
Reserve Enlisted Association of the United States
Reserve Officers Association
Society of Medical Consultants to the Armed Forces
The Retired Enlisted Association
United States Army Warrant Officers Association
United States Coast Guard Chief Petty Officers Association
Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States
Veterans' Widows International Network