



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

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July 16, 2008

The Honorable Daniel K. Akaka
Chairman, Committee on Veterans' Affairs
412 Senate Russell Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-6375

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The Military Coalition (TMC), a consortium of nationally prominent military and veterans organizations, representing more than 5.5 million current and former service members and their families and survivors writes to thank you for your support of the New GI Bill, a truly historic legislative achievement that recognizes the service and sacrifice of this generation of uniformed service members and veterans.

TMC urgently requests your help to fix what we believe was an inadvertent technical error in the law — to ensure that members of the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) and National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration Corps of Commissioned Officers (NOAA Corps) who have served on active duty since September 10, 2001 are entitled to the New GI Bill.

USPHS and NOAA Corps officers have served in every major armed conflict since their establishment. They have been eligible for all other GI bill programs over the last 60 years.

Historically, active-duty USPHS and NOAA Corps officers are included in statute as “veterans” under Title 42 USC §213(d) and Title 38 USC §101(21)(B) and (C). Unfortunately, the language of the New GI Bill refers to another subsection of law that restricts the term “active duty” for the purposes of the law only to members of the Armed Forces.

TMC recognizes that technical corrections should be as close to budget-neutral as possible. The additional cost of covering USPHS and NOAA Corps officers (an active-duty service of only 6,000) and the NOAA Corps (some 300 officers) would be virtually negligible, relative to the more than 1.5 million servicemembers eligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

Over the years, your Committee has been extremely supportive of the USPHS and NOAA Commissioned Corps, and we are most grateful.

The Military Coalition strongly recommends a technical correction of the provisions of the New GI Bill to authorize eligibility for the USPHS and NOAA Commissioned Corps.

Sincerely,

The Military Coalition

(signatures enclosed)

cf: Members, Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs

Air Force Association
Air Force Women Officers Associated
American Logistics Association
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.
Iraq & Afghanistan Veterans of America
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 Guard Association of the United States
National Military Family Association
National Order of Battlefield Commissions
Naval Enlisted Reserve Association
Naval Reserve Association
Navy League of the United States
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