

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 20, 2010

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

The Honorable Richard Burr, Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs Senate  
217 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Akaka and Ranking Member Burr:

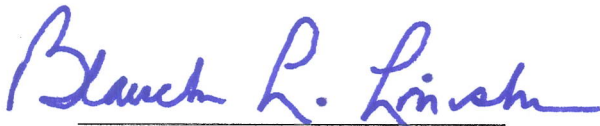
As defined by current law, members of the reserve components who have completed 20 or more years of service are considered to be "military retirees." Subsequently, upon reaching age 60, they are eligible for all of the benefits received by active duty military retirees, such as military retired pay, government health care and other benefits of service, including a number of Veterans' benefits. However, if they have not served a qualifying period of federal active duty, they are denied full standing as a "Veteran" of the armed forces.

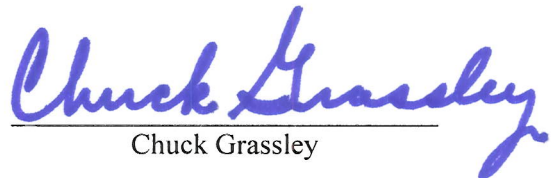
This issue is a matter of honor to those who through no fault of their own were never activated, but served their nation faithfully for 20 or more years. All members of the reserve forces volunteer for service to our nation and are liable for activation in its defense. Twenty or more years of service in the reserve forces and qualification for reserve retired pay should certainly be sufficient qualifying service for full Veteran status under law.

That is why we introduced S.1780, the "Honor America's Guard-Reserve Retirees Act." This bipartisan cost-neutral legislation would grant full Veteran status to members of the reserve components who have 20 or more years of service and do not otherwise qualify under law. On September 28, the House of Representatives unanimously passed this legislation, H.R.3787. While under consideration, we worked closely with the House Veterans Affairs Committee to address potential concerns with the legislation. Subsequently, we amended the bill text to explicitly clarify that it would not bestow eligibility for any new benefits, but would simply ensure there is no ambiguity that these individuals are recognized as full Veterans. We recently reintroduced the Senate bill as S.3875 to reflect these changes. As we proceed legislatively in the Senate, we hope to count on your support as we move toward final passage of this bipartisan and cost-neutral legislation by the end of the year.

While this may not seem of importance to some, for those who wore the same uniform, were subject to the same code of military justice, received the same training and spent twenty years or more being liable for call-up, this lack of recognition as a Veteran is a major insult and a gross injustice. We know of few designations that embody such dignity and honor. These men and women certainly embody those traits, and it is time that we grant them the recognition they have earned. We thank you for your attention to this matter and look forward to working with you as we move forward.

Sincerely,

  
Blanche L. Lincoln

  
Chuck Grassley

  
Ron Wyden