



For God and Country

bulletin

National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission

1608 K Street, N.W. • Washington, D.C. 20006

K. Robert Lewis, Chairman - Connecticut

Peter S. Gaytan, Director - Maryland

20-08

June 13, 2008

**STATEMENT OF
JOSEPH L. WILSON, DEPUTY DIRECTOR
VETERANS AFFAIRS AND REHABILITATION COMMISSION
THE AMERICAN LEGION
TO THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ON**

H.R. 4089 TO AMEND TITLE 38, UNITED STATES CODE, TO IMPROVE THE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING RIGHTS AND PROCEDURES FOR REVIEW OF ADVERSE ACTIONS OF CERTAIN EMPLOYEES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES;

H.R. 4463, VETERANS HEALTH CARE QUALITY IMPROVEMENT ACT;

H.R. 5888, TO AMEND TITLE 38, UNITED STATES CODE, TO EXPAND VETERAN ELIGIBILITY FOR REIMBURSEMENT BY THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS FOR EMERGENCY TREATMENT FURNISHED IN A NON-DEPARTMENT FACILITY;

H.R. 6114, SIMPLIFYING AND UPDATING NATIONAL STANDARDS TO ENCOURAGE TESTING OF THE HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS OF 2008; and

H.R. 6122, TO DIRECT THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A COMPREHENSIVE POLICY ON THE MANAGEMENT OF PAIN EXPERIENCED BY VETERANS ENROLLED FOR HEALTH CARE SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

JUNE 5, 2008

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for this opportunity to submit The American Legion's views on these various pieces of legislation: H.R. 4089, H.R. 4463, H.R. 5888, H.R. 6114, and H.R. 6122.

H.R. 4089

This bill seeks to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the collective bargaining rights and procedures for review of adverse actions of certain employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and for other purposes.

The American Legion has no position on this bill.

H.R. 4463

This bill seeks to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the quality of care provided to veterans in VA medical facilities, to encourage highly qualified doctors to serve in hard-to-fill positions in such medical facilities, and for other purposes.

The American Legion believes medical school affiliations have been a major factor in VA's ability to recruit and retain high quality physicians, and provide veterans access to the most advanced medical technology. When implementing this bill, The American Legion encourages VA to continue to strengthen its affiliation with surrounding medical schools in order to recruit and retain highly qualified doctors who are accustomed to the VA medical care environment.

The American Legion also believes VA should offer incentives to new hires and employees who maintain certifications or continue training in areas above and beyond hospital credentialing and privileging processes. The American Legion supports the Veterans Health Care Quality Improvement Act.

H.R. 5888

This bill seeks to expand veteran eligibility for reimbursement by the Secretary of VA for emergency treatment furnished in a non-Department facility.

The American Legion believes it is essential for veterans to receive emergency medical care from non-VA facilities in the absence of available VA healthcare, or when traveling presents a hazard or hardship for the veteran in accessing care. The American Legion supports the reimbursement of costs incurred by veterans who must receive emergency care at a non-VA facility

H.R. 6114

This bill seeks to simplify and update national standards to encourage testing for the Human Immunodeficiency Virus of 2008

The American Legion has no position on this bill.

H.R. 6122

This bill seeks to direct the VA Secretary to develop and implement a comprehensive policy on the management of pain experienced by veterans enrolled for health care services provided by VA, and for other purposes.

Section 2 proposes the development and implementation of a comprehensive policy on the management of pain experienced by veterans enrolled for health care services provided by VA.

This policy will cover various issues to include:

- VA's programs on research related to acute and chronic pain suffered by veterans, as well as pain attributable to central and peripheral nervous system damage characteristic of injuries incurred in modern warfare;
- the assurance of prompt and appropriate pain care treatment and management by VA, system wide, when medically necessary;
- consistent application of pain assessments to be used throughout VA;
- pain care education and training for VA's health care personnel; and
- patient education for veterans suffering from acute or chronic pain and their families.

To ensure every veteran who suffers from some form of pain receives adequate and seamless treatment and care, The American Legion recommends the continued collaboration between the Department of Defense (DOD) and VA coupled with their increase of education, research, treatment, and therapy best practices by improving accelerating clinical trials at military and VA treatment facilities and affiliated medical centers and research programs.

Additionally, The American Legion urges Congress to increase Federal funding for pain management research, treatment, and ongoing therapies to ensure the success of such programs.

Conclusion

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, The American Legion sincerely appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony and looks forward to working with you and your colleagues on these very important issues. Thank you.