
U.S. Representative

John Spratt

South Carolina # 5th District

News Release

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Spratt Backs Veterans Bills

WASHINGTON – U.S. Rep. John Spratt (D-SC) announced today that he is strongly supporting two veterans’ bills – one to help disabled veterans, widows of veterans, and soon-to-be separated veterans and another to help repair aging, at-risk VA hospitals. Both bills recently passed the House and have moved to the Senate for approval.

“These bills will strengthen and improve veterans’ benefits and veterans’ hospitals,” said Spratt, “and allow us to continue to provide world-class health care for veterans well into this century. I was proud to vote for both bills.”

The two bills backed by Spratt are H.R. 801, the Veterans’ Opportunities Act, and H.R. 811, the Veterans’ Hospitals Emergency Repair Act.

Veterans’ Opportunities Act (H.R. 801)

As passed by the House, the bill would provide the following assistance.

Memorial Affairs, Insurance, and Other Provision

- < Increase the automobile and adaptive equipment grant for severely disabled veterans from \$8,000 to \$9,000.
- < Increase the grant for specially adapted housing for severely disabled veterans from \$43,000 to \$48,000, and increase the amount for less severely disabled veterans from \$8,250 to \$9,250.
- < Increase the burial and funeral allowance made to the family of veterans who die from service-connected causes from \$1,500 to \$2,000; increase the burial and funeral allowances for non-service-connected veterans from \$300 to \$500; and increase the burial plot allowances from \$150 to \$300.
- < Expand the Servicemembers’ Group Life Insurance (SGLI) program to include spouses and children. Spousal coverage will not exceed \$100,000; child coverage would be \$10,000. Upon termination of SGLI, the spouse’s policy could be converted to a private life insurance policy.
- < Make the effective date of an increase from \$200,000 to \$250,000 in the maximum SGLI benefit provided for in Public Law 106-419 retroactive to October 1, 2000, for a service member who died in the performance of duty and had the maximum amount of insurance in

force.

Educational Assistance

- < Increase from \$2,000 to \$3,400 the maximum allowable annual SROTC award for benefits under the Montgomery GI Bill.
- < Expand VA's work-study program for veterans to include working in their major academic discipline, working in state veterans homes, and helping State Approving Agencies with outreach efforts.
- < Provide for inclusion of certain private technology entities in the definition of education institution.
- < Allow the disabled spouse or surviving spouse of a severely disabled service connected veteran to receive special restorative training.
- < Permit veterans to use VA education assistance benefits for a certificate program offered by an accredited institution of higher learning by way of independent study.

Transition and Outreach Provisions

- < Provide VA the authority to maintain transition assistance offices overseas.
- < Extend the time that pre-separation counseling is available to service members leaving the service to as early as 12 months before discharge, and 24 months prior to discharge for military retirees.
- < Improve education and training outreach services by requiring each State Approving Agency to conduct outreach programs and provide services to eligible veterans and dependents about state and federal education and training benefits.
- < For purposes of VA's outreach programs, defines an eligible dependent as the spouse surviving spouse, child, or dependent parent of a service member or veteran. Require VA to ensure that eligible dependents are made aware of VA's services through media and veterans publications.
- < Require VA to provide to the veteran or eligible dependent information concerning VA benefits and services whenever that person first applies for any benefit.

Veterans' Hospitals Emergency Repair Act (H.R. 811)

As passed by the House, the bill would provide \$550 million over two years for construction projects to repair, rebuild, or upgrade dilapidated medical facilities.

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