



Lt Gen Dana T. Atkins, USAF (Ret)
President and CEO

December 14, 2020

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Chairman
Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee
521 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jon Tester
Ranking Member
Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee
311 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mark Takano
Chairman
House Veterans' Affairs Committee
420 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Phil Roe
Ranking Member
House Veterans' Affairs Committee
102 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Moran, Ranking Member Tester, Chairman Takano, and Ranking Member Roe,

On behalf of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA), one of the nation's leading veteran and military services organizations, I am pleased to provide support for H.R. 7105, the Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020.

This major piece of legislation honors two great champions and their service to veterans – informed by their long history of service to their country, in uniform and in Congress – a legacy that will leave a lasting impact on those who served and sacrificed so much for our nation for generations to come.

We are especially grateful to the leadership in the Senate and House Veterans' Committees for pushing through critical provisions from the Deborah Sampson Act to seriously attend to the growing population of women serving in the military and leaving service over the next decade.

Additionally, the education benefits and protections for students, increased support to surviving spouses and dependents, and expanded oversight for veterans in state nursing homes are greatly needed during these uncertain times.

A few of the noteworthy provisions of interest to our members include:

Benefits

- Expands Fry Scholarship eligibility to children of certain deceased members of the Armed Forces
- Lowers from 57 to 55 years old the age at which a surviving spouse may still receive Dependency and Indemnity Compensation benefits at the point of remarriage
- Increases funding for the VET TEC Program

- Extend protections for veteran GI Bill students if COVID-19 negatively impacts their studies
- Expands USERRA protections for reserve component members on state active duty orders and SCRA protections to Coast Guard members for stop-movement orders
- Requires a GAO briefing and report on repealing the manifestation period for presumptions of service connection for certain diseases associated with exposure to herbicide agents

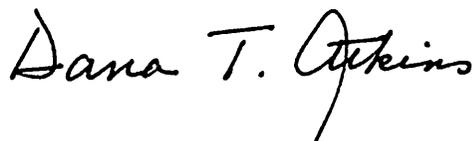
Health Care

- Presumes service connection for servicemembers diagnosed with COVID-19
- Extends oversight for state veterans homes regarding COVID-19 infections, response capacity, and staffing levels
- Requires VA to cover cost of emergency transportation of newborns
- Creates of an Office of Women's Health
- Offers child care program assistance for certain veterans
- Requires a study on infertility services furnished by the VA
- Improves staffing of women's health primary care providers at medical facilities

Many provisions in the bill have been worked over several years by committee members in concert with veteran and military stakeholder groups. While we are very grateful for the legislation, we are concerned about the use, once again, of extending certain home loan fee rates to pay for other veteran benefits. MOAA would like to work with Congress to ensure future benefits are not offset by veterans, but rather obligated by the government.

MOAA applauds the Senate for moving quickly on this bill and passing it unanimously. We now urge immediate passage of the bill in the House so it can be signed into law before the end of the 116th Congress.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dana T. Atkins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "D".