



STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

OF

THE AMERICAN LEGION

TO THE

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

ON

"PENDING AND DRAFT LEGISLATION"

MARCH 10, 2020

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Chairman Levin, Ranking Member Bilirakis, and distinguished members of the committee, on behalf of National Commander James W. "Bill" Oxford and the nearly two million members of The American Legion, we thank you for inviting The American Legion to testify today.

The American Legion is directed by millions of active Legionnaires who dedicate their time and resources to the continued service of veterans and their families. As a resolution-based organization, our positions are guided by nearly 100 years of advocacy and resolutions that originate at the grassroots level of our organization. Every time The American Legion testifies, we offer a direct voice from the veteran community to Congress.

H.R. 2224 - Homeless Veterans with Children Reintegration Act

To amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Labor to prioritize the provision of services to homeless veterans with dependent children in carrying out homeless veterans reintegration programs, and for other purposes

Current funding levels designed to provide services to homeless veterans lack prioritized support for homeless veterans with children. This bill will expand assistance to prioritize veterans with children. According to the National Center on Homeless among Veterans at the Department of Veterans Affairs, veterans, depending on the population, are between two and four times as likely to be homeless as their civilian counterparts¹.

Currently, programs like Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF), which awards grants to organizations that provide services for very-low-income veterans, would benefit. Since this program's inception in 2011, approximately 180,151 households with children to date have been serviced. In 2018, V.A. reported across all grantees, 27,454 veterans served by SSVF had at least one dependent child, or one in six of the total veteran households.² In FY 2019, SSVF supported 20,608 children (19.6%) of 105,156 participants enrolled in this program.

¹ Prevalence and Risk of Homelessness among U.S. Veterans: A Multisite Investigation
https://www.va.gov/homeless/docs/center/prevalence_final.pdf

² Department of Veterans Affairs, "[Supportive Services for Veteran Families FY 2018 Annual Report](#)"

The American Legion urges Congress and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to adjust this program to ensure adequate funding is provided, which will prioritize services to homeless veterans with dependent children that will support their efforts for independent living.

American Legion Resolution No. 324: *Support Funding for Homeless Veterans* calls on Congress to pass legislation to support assisting homeless veterans and their families. This bill is in keeping with our resolution to support and fund federal grant programs to address the unique challenges faced by these veterans.³

The American Legion supports H.R. 2224 as currently written.

H.R. 5056 - Modern GI Bill Act

To amend title 38, United States Code, to allow individuals who are entitled to Post-9/11 educational assistance to use such assistance to repay Federal student loans

Currently, the VA does not possess the statutory or regulatory authority to retroactively apply Post-9/11 G.I. educational benefits toward a servicemember's student loan debt. As such, many veterans are unable to utilize their benefits since they have already earned higher education degrees before entering into service.

Evidence shows that student loan debt is a growing issue for active-duty servicemembers. A 2016 GAO report identified more than 200,000 servicemembers – roughly 15% of total active-duty force - collectively owe more than \$2.9 billion in student debt.⁴

The American Legion does not believe that a veteran who has honorably served and would otherwise be eligible to use Post-9/11 GI educational benefits should be penalized because they chose to pursue a degree before joining. Additionally, as the Department of Defense continues to advance its talent recruitment and retention initiatives, a strong emphasis has been placed on meeting the needs of America's brightest to achieve a more capable force of the future.

This bill allows veterans that enter service with pre-existing student loan debt to retroactively apply their Post-9/11 GI educational benefits toward the repayment of their student loans. Additionally, this bill:

1. Requires the servicemember to indicate the number of months of GI educational assistance that the veteran would like to apply to his/her preexisting student loans.
2. Provides mathematical formulas, which differ depending on the veteran's circumstances, to determine the monetary value of his or her GI educational assistance for purposes of loan repayment.
3. Requires the Secretary of VA to establish procedures and mechanisms to ensure that loan repayments are made only to eligible, outstanding loans.

³ American Legion Resolution No. 324 (2016): [Support Funding for Homeless Veterans](#)

⁴ Estimates are based on the analysis of data provided in "[Student Loans: Oversight of Servicemembers' Interest Rate Cap Could Be Strengthened](#)", GAO-17-4 (Nov. 15, 2016),

4. Prohibits any hindrance, counteraction, or nullification of state-based educational assistance entitlements (i.e., Hazlewood Act).

Through *Resolution No. 22: Expanding Post-9/11 GI Bill for Student Loan Repayments*, The American Legion supports legislation that allows veterans that enter military service with pre-existing student loan debt to retroactively apply their Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits toward the repayment of their student loans.⁵

The American Legion supports this draft legislation *as currently written*.

H.R. 5324 – Sergeant Daniel Somers Veterans Network of Support Act of 2019

To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program on information sharing between the Department of Veterans Affairs and designated relatives and friends of veterans regarding the assistance and benefits available to the veterans, and for other purposes.

The provisions of this bill fall outside the scope of established resolutions of The American Legion. The American Legion is a resolution based, grassroots organization that takes positions on legislation based on resolutions passed by the membership or in meetings of the National Executive Committee. The American Legion has no current position on H.R. 5324. However, The American Legion is currently researching this critical issue to include consulting with our membership to determine the best course of action which best serves veterans.

Draft Legislation

To amend titles 38 and 10, United States Code, to make certain improvements to educational assistance administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and to the Transition Assistance Program and Skillbridge program of the Department of Defense

This proposed legislation would provide the most significant increase in education benefits eligibility for National Guard and Reserve servicemembers since the initial passage of the Post-9/11 GI Bill, and establish long sought for parity between Active and Reserve Components.

In 2015, the Department of Defense Reserve Forces Policy Board tacitly acknowledged the reality that Reservists have faced since 2001:

“National Guard and Reserve [transformed] from a strategic to an operational force with capabilities and capacity that are essential for the United States to meet global requirements... Over the previous two decades, reservists and guardsmen have been ready, accessible, and routinely utilized to meet mission requirements at home and abroad. As of August 2016, over 29,700 members of the R.C. remain activated to meet the needs of the Department, with nearly one million activated since 9/11.”⁶

⁵ American Legion Resolution No. 22 (2018): [Expanding Post-9/11 GI Bill for Student Loan Repayments](#)

⁶ Reserve Forces Policy Board FY17-01, [“Improving the Total Force Using National Guard and Reserves”](#)

Despite DoD's adaptation of an operational model for National Guard and Reserve force postures, current law prevents equitable accrual of GI Bill eligibility for reserve branch service. Specifically, 38 U.S.C. § 3301 defines "active duty" as only Title 10 active duty orders and title 32 orders when authorized by the President of the United States in responding to a national emergency "declared by the President and supported by Federal funds."

In practice, this precludes all monthly drill dates and the wide majority of annual training from accruing GI Bill eligibility as they are not technically defined as active duty. For active duty training, the contrast between Reserve and National Guard is even starker.

As an example, a National Guardsman is ordered to active duty to attend the Army's Combat Engineer Advanced Leaders Course (ALC), an active duty leadership development school for non-commissioned officers. An Army Reservist is ordered to this school and even placed in the same class as the National Guard member. The National Guard member will not accrue any eligibility towards the Post-9/11 GI Bill, while the Army Reservist will earn 6 weeks, 4 days. The reason is that the National Guardsman's orders authorizing him to active duty service are considered "stateside" orders, and therefore ineligible for federal benefits.

This bill would establish parity for National Guard and Reserve servicemembers by adding active duty for training and fulltime National Guard duty to the VA's definition of the term 'active duty' for the purpose of accruing education benefits. The American Legion applauds the Subcommittee for taking the mantle of education benefits parity but recommends further actions be taken to close a medical discharge loophole affecting National Guard servicemembers.

The Post-9/11 GI Bill entitles individuals to 100% GI Bill eligibility after "discharge or release from active duty in the Armed Forces for a service-connected disability." National Guard servicemembers may, while on deployment, sustain injuries that return them stateside to respective National Guard home stations. After further review, said National Guard unit may issue a medical retirement discharge via NGB Separation Form 22. Because this discharge is granted through an NGB-22 and not a DD-214, the V.A. does not consider it an "active duty" discharge and therefore does not award National Guard medical retirees 100% GI Bill eligibility, they are, however, entitled to apply for all other VA medical benefits. To close this loophole, The American Legion recommends Congress explore striking "...active duty in the" from 38 U.S. Code § 3311(b)(2)B.

American Legion Resolution No. 54: *GI Bill Eligibility for Reserve and National Guard Service supports the benefits* supports present and future amendments to U.S. Code to provide Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits for eligible National Guard and Reserve Servicemembers.⁷

The American Legion supports this bill with amendments.

Draft Legislation

To amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to conduct consumer testing to improve the internet website of the Department of Veterans Affairs that provides individuals with postsecondary education information

⁷ Resolution No. 54 (2019): [GI Bill Eligibility for Reserve and National Guard Service](#)

Launched in February 2014 in response to Executive Order 13607, the GI Bill Comparison Tool was just one in a suite of innovative enhancements introduced to ensure veterans and their families had the information they needed to make educated choices about VA education benefits and approved programs. The comparison tool was designed to provide information about college affordability and value. The website brought together data from more than 17 different online sources and three federal agencies to display, for the first time in one place, such information as the number of students receiving V.A. education benefits and the graduation rate at each school.

The tool also provides additional information to assist students in determining which program or school might best meet their needs. For instance, it includes information on approved programs, accreditation, and whether a school is meeting Principles of Excellence requirements. The tool also has information on the Yellow Ribbon program, VetSuccess (if available), and if there is a Student Veterans Group. To ensure the students are aware of challenges or concerns, it will also display a Caution Flag if the VA or other federal agencies have applied increased regulatory or legal scrutiny to an institution's programs and it will also indicate if there have been student complaints against the institution requiring adjudication or investigation.

Given the time passed since its establishment, as well as recent complaints by some school officials as to the accuracy of some data and how it is displayed on the website, we believe that it is appropriate and proper that the VA conduct consumer testing to ensure that the website is indeed providing needed information effectively and efficiently. The VA should seek to ensure that the information provided is correct, conveyed in a user-friendly and transparent manner, and that additional information; potentially not readily available six years ago; is now added to the website.

The GI Bill is an incredible and life-changing benefit, and we must ensure that our nation's veterans have the necessary information available to them to make choices that will provide for their future success, and the financial security of their families. We also encourage the VA to promote the schools and training institutions listed on the website, to monitor closely the information presented and to notify VA of any inaccurate or confusing information so that it can be addressed before any future studies or testing begins.

Our nation's taxpayers have made a critical investment in the future of our veterans and their families, and we owe it to all parties to be sure that in this information age, student veterans have easy access to the right information presented in such a fashion as to ensure future success.

Through Resolution No. 327: *Support Further Assessment and Evaluation of Institutions of Higher Learning to Enable Veterans to Make Informed Education Choices*, The American Legion supports efforts to expand and further disseminate the Department of Veterans Affairs GI Bill Comparison Tool.⁸

The American Legion supports this draft legislation *as currently written*.

⁸ American Legion Resolution No. 327 (2016): [*Support Further Assessment and Evaluation of Institutions of Higher Learning to Enable Veterans to Make Informed Education Choices*](#)

Draft Legislation

To amend title 38, United States Code, to clarify the location of an educational institution conducting programs of education exclusively by distance learning for purposes of the Department of Veterans Affairs approval process

Distance learning, or as the Department of Veterans Affairs refers to it, "independent study", is a rapidly growing and essential methodology in American education today. Research conducted recently by The American Legion suggests that this method of delivery is providing advantages to our veterans and their families in both access and success in quality educational programs. In fact, for many student veterans distance learning allows them to enroll in programs they might not otherwise have access to on campus, and often serves as a critical component in degree completion.

However, recent challenges experienced by some online schools during the approval process point out that the present method of determining the main campus for approval purposes can result in confusion and delay. The existing methods of determining campus location were established long before the recent explosion in online learning. Given the multi-state structure and organizational complexity of some on-line institutions, no longer should the location of the school's President's office solely determine the location of the main campus. Instead, particularly in the online environment, the primary campus location must be determined by where the majority of operational leadership, staff, and student records are found.

Barring a precise determination of these factors, the address at which the educational institution is registered with the Department of Education could be determined (in most cases, we expect these would be the same location). Approving an educational institution where the curriculum, records, and administrative staff is housed is important not only in the initial approval by a State approving agency, but is critical for the continued and effective oversight of approved programs at the online institution by the State approving agency and the VA.

Online learning is here to stay and is critical to the educational success of many of our veterans and their families. It is a proven method of delivering quality education to a diverse population of learners. The American Legion believes that education in all sectors must be properly approved and carefully overseen. We believe this bill is a step in the right direction to provide proper approval and more comprehensive oversight of these types of programs.

Through *Resolution No. 318: Ensuring the Quality of Servicemember and Veteran Student's Education at Institutions of Higher Education*, The American Legion supports any legislative proposal that improves the Post-9/11 GI Bill.⁹

The American Legion supports this draft legislation *as currently written*.

⁹ American Legion Resolution No. 318 (2016): [*Ensuring the Quality of Servicemember and Veteran Student's Education at Institutions of Higher Education*](#)

Draft Legislation

To amend title 38, United States Code, to ensure that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs repays members of the Armed Forces for certain contributions made by such members towards Post-9/11 Educational Assistance

In late 2019, The American Legion was contacted by an Air Force officer with a peculiar education dispute: she paid into the Montgomery GI Bill before transferring over to the Post-9/11 GI Bill, but once her benefits were depleted, VA refused to reimburse her initial \$1,200 investment. Since 2008 VA has specified that Post-9/11 GI Bill recipients may qualify for a refund of the Montgomery GI Bill buy-in¹⁰, but GI Bill hotline staff informed her that due to her active duty status, the VA could not process the refund.

American Legion national staff investigated the issue and discovered that *all* active duty service members are disqualified from a refund of the Montgomery GI Bill due to an unintentional technicality: 38 U.S.C § 3327(f)(3) ties the reimbursement of the benefit to the last payment of the monthly stipend of the education benefit. Active duty service members are not afforded a monthly stipend when using the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

Upon informing the House Veterans Affairs Committee leadership of this loophole, their professional staff worked diligently to identify a solution. This draft legislation corrects the loophole by eliminating the requirement of a monthly stipend for full education reimbursement, and The American Legion applauds Congressman Jim Banks for his work on this issue.

Through *Resolution No. 318: Ensuring the Quality of Servicemember and Veteran Students' Education at Institutions of Higher Education*, The American Legion supports any legislative proposal that improves the Post-9/11 GI Bill.¹¹

The American Legion supports this draft legislation *as currently written*.

Draft Legislation

To amend title 38, United States Code, to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to collect and include certain student outcome information in the GI Bill comparison tool of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes

The GI Bill comparison tool has been a successful innovation that has been incredibly helpful to veterans in choosing the best institutions to meet their educational needs while simultaneously encouraging institutions to provide quality instruction and adequate resources to ensure veteran success. The American Legion offered input and consultation in helping VA develop the tool to make it as useful as possible to academic seeking veterans.

¹⁰ VA GI Bill Customer Help, "Refund of the Montgomery GI Bill \$1,200.00 buy-in for Post-9/11 GI Bill recipients?" https://gibill.custhelp.va.gov/app/answers/detail/a_id/949/~refund-of-the-montgomery-gi-bill-%241%2C200.00-buy-in-for-post-9%2F11-gi-bill

¹¹ American Legion Resolution No. 318 (2016): [*Ensuring the Quality of Servicemember and Veteran Student's Education at Institutions of Higher Education*](#)

Information provided in the comparison tool includes veteran enrollment data, school participation in the Principles of Excellence program, graduation rates, and caution flags to alert veterans to issues they should be aware of. Though an excellent source of information the tool is not without its limitations, and provides little in the way of outcome data to allow veterans to make the best informed choice.

This bill will mandate that VA enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Education and the Internal Revenue Service to ensure meaningful information regarding student outcomes at institutions with programs approved for the GI Bill will be available to student veterans. These outcomes will include such critical data as persistence rate, an average number of years to complete a degree or certificate, the average salary for graduates, and graduation rate.

The American Legion supports this bill, as it is critical to enhancing the ability of veterans to choose the proper educational programs to ensure their success. The American Legion recommends that VA make clear on the comparison tool website whether the information refers to the entire student population or veteran students only. Also, educational institutions should be able to freely review this information and provide the Department of Veterans Affairs with questions or recommendations.

Through Resolution No. 327: *Support Further Assessment and Evaluation of Institutions of Higher Learning to Enable Veterans to Make Informed Education Choices*, The American Legion supports efforts to expand and further disseminate the Department of Veterans Affairs GI Bill Comparison Tool.¹²

The American Legion supports this draft legislation *as currently written*.

Draft Legislation

To rename the Department of Veterans Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation Program as the Vocational Readiness and Employment Program, and for other purposes

The United States can trace its legacy of dedication toward those who lay their life on the line for her defense to 1636 when Virginia's Plymouth Colony decreed that the colony should maintain for life those "maimed" in its defense.¹³ The Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1918 expanded the breadth of this charge further to meet the requirements for veterans of the Great War by establishing that those incapable of carrying on a gainful occupation were eligible for special maintenance allowances to return to a useful place in society.

The charge for this responsibility is as fundamental in 2020 as it was 1917, informed by a 1636 decree from our forefathers. Yet the passage of time brings with it adjustments to parlance and vernacular, and The American Legion believes that the usage of the term "rehabilitation" has narrowed to more specific implications that hinder its practical usage. As the Wounded Warrior

¹² American Legion Resolution No. 327 (2016): [*Support Further Assessment and Evaluation of Institutions of Higher Learning to Enable Veterans to Make Informed Education Choices*](#)

¹³ Topmiller, Robert & Neill, T. Kirby (2011) *Binding Their Wounds*

Project noted in their June 4th testimony before this Subcommittee¹⁴, Webster's 1913 dictionary defined Rehabilitation as "*the restoration of someone to a useful place in society.*" Today, Webster's dictionary defines that same word as "*the process of restoring a person to a drug- or alcohol-free state*" and "*the process of restoring someone (such as a criminal) to a useful and constructive place in society.*"

It follows that veterans not acquainted with the history of the word may first think of drug counseling centers or halfway houses. At worst, this stigmatizes program usage, and at the very least it lends ambiguity to what the real intent of the benefit is.

The American Legion believes that renaming the program to incorporate 21st-century lexicon carries forth our country's strong legacy of caring for the well-being and transition of our wounded warriors, and supports "*Vocational Readiness and Employment Program*" as the proposed name.

Resolution No. 542: National Economic Commission Veterans Employment Policy urges all efforts for workforce development and retraining to be vigorously pursued so that veterans are gainfully employed in suitable and respectable occupations in which they can make their most significant contributions to their country and their community.¹⁵

The American Legion supports this draft legislation *as currently written.*

Draft Legislation

To amend title 38, United States Code, to make a technical correction to clarify that colleges and universities located outside the United States may participate in the Yellow Ribbon Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs

Due to our growing globalized society students are studying abroad at increasing rates, particularly in the past decade. Students in many programs such as business, marketing and foreign language, have the opportunity to study abroad in different formats, and valuable coursework is often offered abroad in needed disciplines.

In recent years we have seen a surge in the number of short-term international service-learning programs. Study abroad allows students to increase their career opportunities by honing language skills and demonstrating success in a global setting. Also, by enhancing their educational experiences in these programs they are better prepared to enroll in and participate successfully in needed fields of graduate study such as international affairs and foreign policy.

In a shrinking world, it does not make sense to deny veteran students the opportunity to enrich their education and better prepare themselves for careers in international business, foreign policy or similar fields. Allowing these veterans to use Yellow Ribbon for these programs increases access to quality programs while ensuring the nation's investment in their education is not unduly

¹⁴ Wounded Warrior Project Statment for the Record, House Committee on Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity on "["Evaluating The Effectiveness of VA Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment \(VR&E\) Programs"](#)", June 4, 2019

¹⁵ American Legion Resolution No. 542 (1961): ["National Economic Commission Veterans Employment Policy"](#)

limited. As such, the American Legion believes this technical correction is both appropriate and needed.

Through *Resolution No. 318: Ensuring the Quality of Servicemember and Veteran Students' Education at Institutions of Higher Education*, The American Legion supports any legislative proposal that improves the Post-9/11 GI Bill.¹⁶

The American Legion supports this draft legislation *as currently written*.

Draft Legislation

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a Native VetSuccess on a Tribal Colleges and Universities Pilot Program

The VetSuccess on Campus (VSOC) program is designed to help student veterans and their families succeed and thrive through a coordinated delivery of benefits assistance and counseling on college campuses in our nation. These centers, staffed by trained VA and college personnel, assist veterans so that they may complete their education and be better prepared to be successful in their chosen careers. VSOC personnel provide educational and vocational assessment and counseling as well as community and campus outreach, so veterans are aware and have access to information about educational benefits, health services, and other V.A. benefits.

Currently, 94 campuses are designated as VSOC sites with approximately 79 full-time employees serving as VSOC counselors. However, no tribal colleges or universities, which help our Native American population, have an established program.

This bill would create a pilot program so that within 18 months of enactment of this bill, the Secretary would establish a Native VetSuccess on Tribal Colleges and Universities Pilot Program at three Tribal Colleges and Universities. These programs, staffed by a full-time VSOC counselor and an outreach coordinator, will provide services to enhance educational achievement, degree completion, and eventual employment for the minority veterans served by these colleges.

Additionally, the Center will be responsible for accumulating data on graduation and employment that will be provided to congressional committees. This report, and the data included therein, will better inform the design of future programs that will promote success for veterans and their eligible dependents at institutions of higher learning and training establishments throughout our nation.

Through *Resolution No. 318: Ensuring the Quality of Servicemember and Veteran Students' Education at Institutions of Higher Education*, The American Legion supports any legislative proposal that improves the Post-9/11 GI Bill.¹⁷

The American Legion supports this draft legislation *as currently written*.

¹⁶ American Legion Resolution No. 318 (2016): [Ensuring the Quality of Servicemember and Veteran Student's Education at Institutions of Higher Education](#)

¹⁷ American Legion Resolution No. 318 (2016): [Ensuring the Quality of Servicemember and Veteran Student's Education at Institutions of Higher Education](#)

Draft Legislation – Reducing Veteran Homelessness Act of 2020

To amend title 38, United States Code, and the Honoring of America's Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act of 2012, to make certain enhancements to grants and agreements between the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and entities that provide services to homeless veterans

Although the last ten years have shown a decrease in the number of homeless veterans, in 2018, there were over 38,800 veterans still experiencing homelessness in the United States. These numbers prove that there is still a need for the Department of Veterans Affairs to continue funding services for program providers and staffing requirements to help end chronic homelessness.

The American Legion urges Congress and the VA to find resources to provide continued support to entities providing services to homeless veterans and contract as needed, HUD-VASH case managers to support the influx of veterans seeking services. This bill is in keeping with our resolution to support and fund federal grant programs to address the unique challenges faced by these veterans. American Legion Resolution No. 324: Support Funding for Homeless Veterans calls on Congress to pass legislation to support assisting homeless veterans.¹⁸

The American Legion supports this draft legislation *as currently written*.

Draft Legislation

To authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to enter into a memorandum of understanding with the Secretary of Health and Human Services to coordinate case management services for veterans receiving housing vouchers under Tribal HUD-VASH program

The Department of Veteran Affairs collaborates with several entities to provide services to homeless veterans in communities across the nation. This collaborative effort requires the Secretary to have the flexibility to adjust support at various stages with different organizations, based on funding levels, labor requirements, and workload.

Additionally, this legislation will improve HUD-VASH case management capacity to handle HUD-VASH recipients with no degradation in service to veterans.

American Legion Resolution No. 332: *Support Funding for the Department of Housing and Urban Development (H.U.D.) and Veterans Affairs (V.A.) Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Homeless Program* calls on Congress to pass legislation to ease the difficulties experienced by America's veterans to help homeless veterans and their immediate family members by providing permanent housing with case management and supportive clinical services.¹⁹

The American Legion supports this draft legislation *as currently written*.

¹⁸ American Legion Resolution No. 324 (2016): [Support Funding for Homeless Veterans](#)

¹⁹ Resolution No. 332 (2016): [Support Funding for the Department of Housing and Urban Development \(HUD\) and Veterans Affairs \(VA\) Supportive Housing \(HUD-VASH\) Homeless Program](#)

Draft Legislation

To amend Title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to reimburse a recipient of a certain grant, made by the Secretary relating to homeless veterans fee to use the homeless management system

The Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is a community-based application that collects and reports on the characteristics and needs of an underserved population seeking shelter. VA grantees are required to participate in HMIS per 38 C.F.R. §62.71 to provide VA with the necessary information to assess the outcomes associated with grantees' programs.

This draft legislation would authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs the authority to reimburse a recipient of a grant relating to homeless veterans the fees associated with the use of HMIS. While HUD provides grants to improve HMIS for existing users, passing this bill will allow grantees to use the system as mandated by HUD with potentially low to no costs, which may prevent inconsistencies or lack of efficient reporting.

American Legion Resolution No. 324: *Support Funding for Homeless Veterans* calls on Congress to pass legislation to support assisting homeless veterans and their families.²⁰

The American Legion supports this draft legislation *as currently written*.

CONCLUSION

Chairman Levin, Ranking Member Bilirakis, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee; The American Legion thanks you for your leadership and for allowing us the opportunity to explain the positions of our nearly two million members on the importance of these pieces of proposed legislation. Questions concerning this testimony can be directed to Mr. Jeffrey Steele, Senior Legislative Associate in The American Legion's Legislative Division at (202) 861-2700, or jsteele@legion.org.

²⁰ American Legion Resolution No. 324 (2016): [*Support Funding for Homeless Veterans*](#)