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Commander: keep Senate bill focused on vets

American Legion leader says no other issues need to be attached to legislation to improve health care, education, employment and benefits for those who served our nation.

WASHINGTON (Feb. 26, 2014) -- American Legion National Commander Daniel M. Dellinger said Wednesday that sanctions against Iran have no place in a U.S. Senate debate over legislation that aims to expand health care, education opportunities, employment and other benefits for veterans.

"Iran is a serious issue that Congress needs to address, but it cannot be tied to S. 1982, which is extremely important as our nation prepares to welcome millions of U.S. military servicemen and women home from war. This comprehensive bill aims to help veterans find good jobs, get the health care they need and make in-state tuition rates applicable to all who are using their GI Bill benefits. This legislation is about supporting veterans, pure and simple. The Senate can debate various aspects of it, and that’s understandable, but it cannot lose focus on the matter at hand: helping military personnel make the transition to veteran life and ensuring that those who served their nation in uniform receive the benefits they earned and deserve. We can deal with Iran – or any other issue unrelated specifically to veterans – with separate legislation."

A 99-0 vote in the Senate Tuesday cleared the way for a full debate on S. 1982, introduced by Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., chairman of the Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs. The bill seeks to improve medical and dental care offered by the Department of Veterans Affairs, open 27 new VA clinics where access to care is now difficult, renew the Vow to Hire Heroes Act that has helped some 70,000 veterans find jobs and receive employment training, improve care for those who experienced military sexual trauma and protect cost-of-living adjustments for future military retirees.

Dellinger is the leader of the nation’s largest veterans service organization, the 2.4-million-member American Legion.
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