The American Legion

OFFICE OF THE
NATIONAL COMMANDER

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Dear Representative,

On behalf of the over 2 million members of The American Legion, we write to you in regard to a provision in the 2017 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) passed by the U.S. Senate. The American Legion strongly opposes section 1134 of the NDAA (S.2943) which seeks to undermine the institution of veterans preference in federal hiring.

Codified in public law and bolstered by the President's Executive Order 13518, the government has a fiduciary responsibility and legal obligation to hire those who have borne the battle. One would think the agency that produces veterans and service-disabled veterans would have the additional moral obligation to uphold the institution of Veterans Preference. Instead, the Department of Defense (DOD) turned their backs on their former employees, by initiating a provision within the NDAA that would hamper veteran advancement within the federal agencies.

The myth surrounding Veterans Preference must be dispelled; veterans preference is not a handout. Veterans Preference was created to accelerate reintegration into the workforce for Servicemembers who were forcibly removed from their civilian lives during times of war. Further, the federal government is not giving unqualified veterans jobs that would otherwise go to qualified non-veterans. The institution of Veterans Preference is the nation's acknowledgment that a Servicemembers years of service count for something; it may not be relevant work experience or tenure, but it accounts for something that tips the weight in our favor when we share the same education and work experience as our civilian counterpart. We emphasize that Veterans Preference is only invoked when prospective candidate qualifications are in equipoise.

The American Legion passed Resolution No. 342 in 2014 to defend the institution of Veterans Preference. We deplore this attempt to degrade the precedence of giving job eligibility preference to those who were taken from their communities to serve their country in time of war. We urge lawmakers at every level of government to oppose efforts to dilute veterans preference in government hiring practices. The American Legion calls upon Congress to stand up for our heroes, as they have done for this nation.

Since 1919, The American Legion has stood as a bastion in defense of our nation's veterans. Today, we ask that you stand with us in opposition to this morally-bankrupt tactic conjured by DOD to circumvent the preferential hiring of veterans, because the men and women who served this great nation deserve employment opportunities that they are qualified for.

Respectfully,

DALE BARNETT
National Commander