



March 28, 2017

The Honorable Al Franken
United States Senate
309 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

On behalf of the Association of the United States Navy, we would like to pledge our support for S. 667, the Reserve Component Benefits Parity Act. This bill would ensure that mobilized National Guard and Reserve Troops who have carried out the same duties as active duty forces are also eligible for the same health, education, leave, pay and retirement benefits they've earned while deployed.

The bill would provide fairness to National Guard and Reserve troops who carry out equivalent duties alongside active duty troops, but who currently are not eligible for the same important benefits. The 2012 National Defense Authorization Act gave the Department of Defense the authority to order National Guard and Reserve personnel to active duty, but it did not extend to those troops access to the same benefits. The Reserve Component Benefits Parity *Act* would remedy that and make it retroactive to cover approximately 5,800 National Guard and Reserve Troops mobilized since 2012.

The Reserve Component Benefits Parity Act would provide the following benefits currently earned by Active Duty forces but denied to many mobilized National Guard and Reserve members:

- Provide pre-mobilization access to TRICARE health benefits.
- Provide for reduction in age eligibility of retired pay for National Guard and Reserve soldiers called to active duty.
- Provide post-9/11 GI Bill benefits.
- Will allow National Guard and Reserve Component forces to accrue high deployment allowance for service, thus preventing National Guard soldiers from being sent on rapid successive deployment.
- Provide protection of eligibility for training and rehabilitation services interrupted by deployments.
- Provides for no reduction in federal pay for federal employees deployed under 12304B.

The bill will be retroactive to the passage of the 2012 NDAA to ensure that the over 5,800 National Guard and Reserve Component soldiers that have been deployed, are currently deployed, or will be deployed have access to the same benefits they would under other deployment authorities.

Thank you for taking an active role in such an important issue to the Military and Veteran community by working to improve the lives and careers of those who served our great nation. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns at 703-548-5800 or at michael.little@ausn.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael Joseph Little". To the right of the signature, there are handwritten notations: "ABH² (AW/Sea)" and "USNR".

Michael J. Little
Director of Legislative Affairs