

I think the second book was the one that was incredible. Let me read this because I just thought if there was anything that somebody did out of love, it was Mr. Abraham.

His second book was "Oh, God, Where Are You?" I want you to think of this as a prisoner of war who survived the Bataan Death March, who watched his colleagues killed along the way, and if they fell down, they got shot. Toward the end, when they fell down and they couldn't move anymore, they were put into open graves, and they were told to go ahead and cover the graves. He refused to do it. He said: They are still moving.

So we come to today and we think about what it is that we as Americans can do. What is it we can do? What is in our hearts? What is in our memory? What about all those who came before us and what they went through?

Mr. Abraham, as a child, went to school barefoot. His family didn't have money to even buy him shoes, but he had a love for our Nation. He had a love for his fellow man. He had a love for veterans that was just incredible. But imagine the despair of being in that prison camp and not knowing what was going on in the outside war.

I asked him: What did you do? How did you keep people's spirits up?

He said: I made up stories. I would tell them that I just heard there was a rumor going through camp that our armies are close and they are going to rescue us.

Think about that. They were clinging to a made-up story from this man because he knew that is how he could keep their spirits up in the darkest of times. He kind of smiled about it.

I said: That is incredible.

He said: Well, sometimes you have to do things a little different just to get people's spirits up.

I want you to fast forward to who this man was. I watched him walk with a cane as he got into his later years, in his eighties and nineties, going to VA Butler Healthcare Center every single day to help fellow veterans. His sole purpose in life was to help other American citizens, to help other veterans, to bring a little light into their life, to bring a little happiness into their life; 40,000 hours of service in a VA center. He could have spent his time doing other things, but he didn't. He chose to stay with those he loved. He chose to serve those he loved. He chose to continue to serve even in his retirement this Nation that he loved so much.

I can't tell you how much it means to be able to look at that new health center going up and knowing that Mr. Abraham, from his new post, is looking down and is so thankful to a grateful nation that we are taking time to take care of those who have given everything they can to make sure our Nation remains free.

This is an incredible time in our history. This has nothing to do with parties. It has nothing to do with who you vote for. It has to do with who we are,

the fact that every single one of us has a role. I would just ask people to please look into Abie Abraham. Go online and see about Mr. Abraham. Go and see what Master Sergeant Abraham did, and say: If I could just be a little bit like Abie Abraham, the world would be a better place. For all those who have died in the service of our country, they will rest easier.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I have no additional speakers and I am prepared to close.

I would just like to thank the gentleman again for bringing this to our attention, honoring Master Sergeant Abraham's life. Again, I think there is a little lesson here of how we conduct ourselves reflects on the sacrifice that people like Mr. Abraham gave; and the gentleman has done so honorably and nobly, and I thank him for that. I encourage my colleagues to support H.R. 609.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I think this is an amazing story that Mr. KELLY shared before us. I had a history professor in college who survived the Bataan Death March. He spent 3½ years in the same—I wonder if these two men knew each other. He, indeed, too, was a remarkable man. I can think of no better honor in Butler, Pennsylvania, than to honor his memory by naming this medical center. Once again, I encourage all Members to support this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. ROE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 609.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### WORKING TO INTEGRATE NETWORKS GUARANTEEING MEMBER ACCESS NOW ACT

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 512) to title 38, United States Code, to permit veterans to grant access to their records in the databases of the Veterans Benefits Administration to certain designated congressional employees, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 512

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

#### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Working to Integrate Networks Guaranteeing Member Access Now Act" or the "WINGMAN Act".

#### SEC. 2. PROVISION OF ACCESS TO CASE-TRACKING INFORMATION.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 59 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

#### "§ 5906. Access of certain congressional employees to veteran records

"(a) IN GENERAL.—(1) The Secretary shall provide to each veteran who submits a claim for benefits under the laws administered by the Secretary an opportunity to permit a covered congressional employee employed in the office of the Member of Congress representing the district where the veteran resides to have access to all of the records of the veteran in the databases of the Veterans Benefits Administration.

"(2) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, upon receipt of the permission from the veteran under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall provide read-only access to such records to such a covered congressional employee in a manner that does not allow such employee to modify the data contained in such records or in any part of a database of the Veterans Benefits Administration.

"(3) A Member of Congress may designate not more than two employees of the Member as covered congressional employees.

"(b) REQUIREMENTS.—The Secretary may not impose any requirement other than the requirements specified under subsection (e)(1) before treating an employee as a covered congressional employee for purposes of this section.

"(c) NONRECOGNITION.—A covered congressional employee may not be recognized as an agent or attorney under this chapter.

"(d) LIMITATION ON USE OF FUNDS.—None of the amounts made available to carry out this section may be used to design, develop, or administer any training for purposes of providing training to covered congressional employees.

"(e) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

"(1) The term 'covered congressional employee' means a permanent, full-time employee of a Member of Congress—

"(A) whose responsibilities include assisting the constituents of the Member with issues regarding departments or agencies of the Federal Government;

"(B) who satisfies the criteria required by the Secretary for recognition as an agent or attorney under this chapter; and

"(C) who is designated by the Member of Congress as a covered congressional employee for purposes of this section.

"(2) The term 'database of the Veterans Benefits Administration' means any database of the Veterans Benefits Administration in which the records of veterans relating to claims for benefits under the laws administered by the Secretary are retained, including information regarding medical records, compensation and pension exams records, rating decisions, statements of the case, supplementary statements of the case, notices of disagreement, Form-9, and any successor form.

"(3) The term 'Member of Congress' means a Representative, a Senator, a Delegate to Congress, or the Resident Commissioner of Puerto Rico."

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by adding at the end the following new item:

"5906. Access of certain congressional employees to veteran records."

(c) NO AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—No additional funds are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section or the amendments made by this section. This section and such amendments may only be carried out using amounts otherwise authorized to be appropriated, of which, during the period of fiscal years 2018 through 2021, not more than \$10,000,000 may be obligated or expended for such purpose.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from

Tennessee (Mr. ROE) and the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. WALZ) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and add extraneous material.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Tennessee?

There was no objection.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today and urge all Members to support H.R. 512, as amended, the WINGMAN Act.

First, I want to say a special thanks to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. YOH) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. RODNEY DAVIS), our colleagues, for introducing the WINGMAN Act. This bill will help Members cut through the red tape and help constituents who have applied for benefits from VA.

Isn't that why we are here, to help our constituents?

The problem is that when a constituent calls one of our offices to ask about the status of a claim for benefits, the only thing we can do is write VA and wait for the VA to respond. I know I get very frustrated, and I am sure my colleagues do as well, with how long it takes for the VA to get back to us. The WINGMAN Act provides a simple solution. The bill allows designated, permanent, full-time congressional staffers to look up the status of a claim on VA's database, but only if the veteran has given the staffer permission. Staffers would have read-only access to VA databases, meaning they wouldn't be able to add or remove any information.

Passing H.R. 512, as amended, would allow Members to help constituents who simply want to understand the status of their claim for benefits. I urge all of my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 512, as amended.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

□ 1645

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 512, as amended, the WINGMAN Act. I, too, would like to thank the gentleman from Florida for trying to do all they can to speed constituent services to their folks.

This legislation gives certain designated congressional office case-workers access to veterans' electronic disability claim records at the Veterans Benefits Administration, or VBA. It has broad support in this House, both Democrat and Republican.

This bill would allow designated congressional employees to have read-only access to the Veterans Benefits Administration database to look at veterans' records. Congressional staff would not

be able to add or remove anything from a record, but simply check on the status of a veteran's claim and check that evidence and documentation are submitted. The reason this is so important is that a veteran will, at times, wait months, only to be told a piece of document has been missing that could have been added months before. It makes sense. It tracks the system. It ensures that the veteran is getting the fastest, best possible claim adjudication.

The purpose is to provide that faster status and let them know. There are privacy safeguards in the bill, which reinforce the necessity for getting prior consent from the veteran. Also, the bill clearly requires that congressional employees designated for this access must be full-time employees who provide constituent services.

Veterans service organizations have suggested that the VA should put a tracking system in place to ensure that these employees are only assisting constituents from their congressional district, and that congressional staff be held accountable if found to abuse any aspect of this new and unprecedented authority. I support that suggestion.

In my district, county veterans service organizations have also asked to have read-only access to veterans' records so they can assist veterans. I wish to work with Chairman ROE to examine whether that might be something that could be included down the road.

There is broad bipartisan support for giving congressional staff access to veterans' records so they can help veterans navigate a complex claims system. Often it takes too long to find out the status of a veteran's claim from the VA. Allowing certain professional staff to do the checking themselves seems like a simple step in the right direction, and I support it.

Last Congress, similar legislation to H.R. 512 unanimously passed this House. I urge my colleagues to support it today.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) control the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Tennessee?

There was no objection.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BERGMAN).

Mr. BERGMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 512, the WINGMAN Act.

I am honored to represent the First District of Michigan, which, as a State, has a higher than average percentage of veterans, and the First District has double the percentage of veterans of the rest of the State. To advocate for these fine men and women who have served so honorably, we have the absolute imperative to make sure that they get the help that they need to cut

through the bureaucratic red tape at agencies such as the Department of Veterans Affairs.

I have been serving in Congress for just over a month now, and, already, my office has been flooded with requests from veterans seeking aid in navigating the benefits claims process.

Unfortunately, the VA is notoriously plagued by a culture of complacency and inefficiency. Even something as simple as checking the status of a veteran's claim means that congressional staff members have to circle back around numerous times with VA employees before being able to provide the veterans in the First District with an accurate update.

As a veteran of the Vietnam war, I know that time is valuable to our veterans. We have to introduce more efficiency and transparency into the benefits claims process.

H.R. 512 is designed to cut out the middle step. The WINGMAN Act provides congressional offices with read-only access to veterans' records within the Veterans Benefits Administration. This commonsense bill allows our veterans quicker access to simple status inquiries, provides greater transparency for congressional offices, and allows the VA employees more time to work on completing these claims.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from the Northern Mariana Islands (Mr. SABLON), my good friend, a member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, and a stalwart supporter of this Nation's veterans and those in uniform.

Mr. SABLON. Mr. Speaker, I thank my good friend, the ranking member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, Mr. WALZ, for allowing me to speak in support of H.R. 512, the WINGMAN Act.

I rise today in support of H.R. 512, the WINGMAN Act, introduced by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. YOH), my colleague, which would allow veterans to grant designated congressional office staff read-only access to their claim records within the VBA, Veterans Benefits Administration.

Mr. Speaker, there are no Veterans Benefits Administration personnel in the Northern Marianas. The veterans in my district have no one to meet with, but for the very occasional, usually one 6-hour visit to the Marianas from a VBA staff based in Guam or Hawaii. It usually comes once every 6 months if we are lucky.

Staffs' request for information on behalf of veterans sometimes takes months to receive a reply. This bipartisan bill would eliminate the delay by enabling permitted staff to obtain the information directly from VBA databases. This would be especially meaningful to veterans in my district who face additional challenges for disability claims due to the lack of VA presence.

Mr. Speaker, I represent three islands. I work with Social Security and Selective Service, of course, like other Members. For Social Security, we are

allowed to go and take data information, application forms, bring them to the main island of Saipan, where we go in line like everyone else and submit the applications on behalf of those constituents we serve.

So having separate islands and having a post office in one island and no post office in another island is a little complicated and difficult. Can you just imagine for the veteran who needs access to his VBA records or who needs access to his Veterans Health Administration file? Because we only have one in the Northern Marianas. This one really would allow us to serve the veterans who deserve nothing else but the best.

Our veterans responded to our call to serve and defend this country without hesitation. We must, in return, do everything we can to serve them in the same manner.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. YOH), a good friend and a strong advocate for our veterans.

Mr. YOH. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Mr. BILIRAKIS for the work that he has done. And I want to congratulate Chairman ROE for taking over the Veterans' Affairs Committee.

I would also like to thank the committee staff for their diligence and help on this piece of legislation, as well as the co-leads of this bill, Representatives RODNEY DAVIS, KYRSTEN SINEMA, and JOHN DELANEY.

Last Congress, WINGMAN passed the Veterans' Affairs Committee unanimously in the House due to the bipartisan support of the Members of this Chamber. While it was disappointing that we were unable to get it across the finish line in the Senate, I feel confident, given the support this bill has witnessed early on in this year, with 175 Members in the House and 7 Members in the Senate, I am encouraged, and my hope is that we will see it pass the Senate this Congress and be signed into law by the President.

Congressional constituent advocates worked diligently in our district offices to help veterans navigate the VA claims appeals system. But, they are hampered by having to wait weeks, months, and sometimes even years to receive documents from the VA that are often vital to helping the veteran reach a favorable resolution.

WINGMAN will help to expedite the process by cutting out the middleman and providing direct access to the files our office already has permission to obtain. Currently, advocates must have a privacy release form signed by the constituent prior to acting on their behalf. This doesn't change. What changes is the wait time our offices, veterans, and their families must endure while the VA sends us the appropriate documents.

WINGMAN will help veterans such as James, from my district, who had eight separate, but related, claims filed. He

didn't know which files were attached to which claims, the dates they were received, which department they were referred to, or that he could have filed one single, fully developed claim. Had my staff had access to the files, which WINGMAN permits, they would have been able to assess the issue and update his claims without having to go on a wild goose chase for the documents with the VA system. Getting his case on track could have happened in a matter of days, rather than years. He is more than deserving of this, especially since some of his claims are over 6 years old.

Another constituent lost her husband while he was serving this Nation. The VA was mailing all correspondence to his widow to an incorrect address. This resulted in an overpayment, which she was unaware of since she was not receiving the mail. The long-term result was a veteran's widow having her account sent to collections, which damaged her credit, and ended with her new spouse's tax return being confiscated. With access to the system files, our office would have had a clearer picture of the timeline of events and been able to direct and streamline our inquiry. Instead, our staff had to hunt down the relevant files from numerous branches within the VA and reassemble them like a jigsaw puzzle.

When I hear the story of Sergeant ABRAHAM or Colonel BERGMAN or Staff Sergeant BRIAN MAST behind me, these people have paid a price for their service to this country, and our country owes them a debt. As a country, we can do better by our veterans and their families. WINGMAN will not get rid of the claims backlog or solve all of the problems. What it will do, however, is make the process helping our veterans easier.

Let's put the words "customer service" into our government. So I encourage my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Hawaii (Ms. GABBARD) one of our warriors and a veteran of the war in Iraq, and a staunch advocate for this Nation's veterans.

Ms. GABBARD. Mr. Speaker, one of the things I appreciate most about the job that I have to represent Hawaii's Second District is to be able to respond to and provide assistance to the hundreds of veterans from across my State that contact our office every single year. They call to ask for help with things like compensation and pension issues, health care, mileage reimbursement, especially for our veterans who live on the neighboring islands where they don't have a VA clinic on an island, education, home loan benefits, and more. This is a responsibility as a Member of Congress and as a fellow veteran that I take very seriously.

Right now, if a veteran contacts my office for assistance, we are required to go directly through the congressional liaison at the VA. We act as the veterans advocate to try to get answers

for them on things that they haven't been able to get answers on, things that they haven't heard back on.

Too often, we are faced with the bureaucratic layers within the VA and a slow turnaround that leave congressional staff, like mine and my colleagues here, jumping through hoops to access basic, but critical, information on behalf of our veterans and their families. At times, we have waited for months to get answers from the VA on behalf of a Hawaii veteran for something that should be a quick turnaround, like a status update. This is unacceptable.

I am proud to cosponsor the WINGMAN Act, legislation introduced by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. YOH), my friend and colleague, which allows us to cut through the red tape and ensure that our certified caseworkers within our offices can provide quicker, more efficient, and effective service to our veterans. It would help streamline the veterans claims process by allowing congressional offices on behalf of our veteran constituents to directly access the status of pending claims, rating decisions, statement of the case, and so on.

I urge my colleagues to support this commonsense legislation so that all of us working here in the people's House can better serve our veterans who have sacrificed so much for our communities and our country.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers. I urge support of H.R. 512.

I yield back the balance of my time.

□ 1700

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, once again, I encourage all Members to support this legislation.

Representative YOH does outstanding work. He traveled to VISN 8 in St. Petersburg, Florida, which is about 3 hours away. We had a discussion about this particular issue. He came up with the suggestion, and he is following through with it. It is a good piece of legislation. Let's get it through the Senate this time.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. ROE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 512, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

The title of the bill was amended so as to read: "A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to permit veterans to grant access to their records in the databases of the Veterans Benefits Administration to certain designated congressional employees, and for other purposes."

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

# HONORING INVESTMENTS IN RECRUITING AND EMPLOYING AMERICAN MILITARY VETERANS ACT OF 2017

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 244) to encourage effective, voluntary private sector investments to recruit, employ, and retain men and women who have served in the United States military with annual presidential awards to private sector employers recognizing such efforts, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 244

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

## SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Honoring Investments in Recruiting and Employing American Military Veterans Act of 2017” or the “HIRE Vets Act”.

## SEC. 2. HIRE VETS MEDALLION AWARD PROGRAM.

(a) PROGRAM ESTABLISHED.—Not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Labor shall establish, by rule, a HIRE Vets Medallion Program to solicit voluntary information from employers for purposes of recognizing, by means of an award to be designated a “HIRE Vets Medallion Award”, verified efforts by such employers—

(1) to recruit, employ, and retain veterans; and

(2) to provide community and charitable services supporting the veteran community.

(b) APPLICATION PROCESS.—Beginning in the calendar year following the calendar year in which the Secretary establishes the program, the Secretary shall annually—

(1) solicit and accept voluntary applications from employers in order to consider whether those employers should receive a HIRE Vets Medallion Award;

(2) review applications received in each calendar year; and

(3) notify such recipients of their awards; and

(4) at a time to coincide with the annual commemoration of Veterans Day—

(A) announce the names of such recipients;

(B) recognize such recipients through publication in the Federal Register; and

(C) issue to each such recipient—

(i) a HIRE Vets Medallion Award of the level determined under section 3; and

(ii) a certificate stating that such employer is entitled to display such HIRE Vets Medallion Award.

(C) TIMING.—

(1) SOLICITATION PERIOD.—The Secretary shall solicit applications not later than January 31st of each calendar year for the Awards to be awarded in November of that calendar year.

(2) END OF ACCEPTANCE PERIOD.—The Secretary shall stop accepting applications not earlier than April 30th of each calendar year for the Awards to be awarded in November of that calendar year.

(3) REVIEW PERIOD.—The Secretary shall finish reviewing applications not later than August 31st of each calendar year for the Awards to be awarded in November of that calendar year.

(4) SELECTION OF RECIPIENTS.—The Secretary shall select the employers to receive HIRE Vets Medallion Awards not later than September 30th of each calendar year for the Awards to be awarded in November of that calendar year.

(5) NOTICE TO RECIPIENTS.—The Secretary shall notify employers who will receive HIRE Vets Medallion Awards not later than October 11th of each calendar year for the Awards to be awarded in November of that calendar year.

(d) LIMITATION.—An employer who receives a HIRE Vets Medallion Award for one calendar year is not eligible to receive a HIRE Vets Medallion Award for the subsequent calendar year.

## SEC. 3. SELECTION OF RECIPIENTS.

(a) APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall review all applications received in a calendar year to determine whether an employer should receive a HIRE Vets Medallion Award, and, if so, of what level.

(2) APPLICATION CONTENTS.—The Secretary shall require that all applications provide information on the programs and other efforts of applicant employers during the calendar year prior to that in which the medallion is to be awarded, including the categories and activities governing the level of award for which the applicant is eligible under subsection (b).

(3) VERIFICATION.—The Secretary shall verify all information provided in the applications, to the extent that such information is relevant in determining whether or not an employer should receive a HIRE Vets Medallion Award or in determining the appropriate level of HIRE Vets Medallion Award for that employer to receive, including by requiring the chief executive officer or the chief human relations officer of the employer to attest under penalty of perjury that the employer has met the criteria described in subsection (b) for a particular level of Award.

(b) AWARDS.—

(1) LARGE EMPLOYERS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall establish two levels of HIRE Vets Medallion Awards to be awarded to employers employing 500 or more employees, to be designated the “Gold HIRE Vets Medallion Award” and the “Platinum HIRE Vets Medallion Award”.

(B) GOLD HIRE VETS MEDALLION AWARD.—No employer shall be eligible to receive a Gold HIRE Vets Medallion Award in a given calendar year unless—

(i) veterans constitute not less than 7 percent of all employees hired by such employer during the prior calendar year;

(ii) such employer has retained not less than 75 percent of the veteran employees hired during the calendar year preceding the preceding calendar year for a period of at least 12 months from the date on which the employees were hired;

(iii) such employer has established an employee veteran organization or resource group to assist new veteran employees with integration, including coaching and mentoring; and

(iv) such employer has established programs to enhance the leadership skills of veteran employees during their employment.

(C) PLATINUM HIRE VETS MEDALLION AWARD.—No employer shall be eligible to receive a Platinum HIRE Vets Medallion Award in a given calendar year unless—

(i) the employer meets all the requirements for eligibility for a Gold HIRE Vets Medallion Award under subparagraph (B);

(ii) veterans constitute not less than 10 percent of all employees hired by such employer during the prior calendar year;

(iii) such employer has retained not less than 85 percent of the veteran employees hired during the calendar year preceding the preceding calendar year for a period of at least 12 months from the date on which the employees were hired;

(iv) such employer employs dedicated human resources professionals to support

hiring and retention of veteran employees, including efforts focused on veteran hiring and training;

(v) such employer provides each of its employees serving on active duty in the United States National Guard or Reserve with compensation sufficient, in combination with the employee's active duty pay, to achieve a combined level of income commensurate with the employee's salary prior to undertaking active duty; and

(vi) such employer has a tuition assistance program to support veteran employees' attendance in postsecondary education during the term of their employment.

(D) EXEMPTION FOR SMALLER EMPLOYERS.—An employer shall be deemed to meet the requirements of subparagraph (C)(iv) if such employer—

(i) employs 5,000 or fewer employees; and

(ii) employs at least one human resources professional whose regular work duties include those described under subparagraph (C)(iv).

(E) ADDITIONAL CRITERIA.—The Secretary may provide, by rule, additional criteria with which to determine qualifications for receipt of each level of HIRE Vets Medallion Award.

(2) SMALL- AND MEDIUM-SIZED EMPLOYERS.—The Secretary shall establish similar awards in order to recognize achievements in supporting veterans by—

(A) employers with 50 or fewer employees; and

(B) employers with more than 50 but fewer than 500 employees.

(c) DESIGN BY SECRETARY.—The Secretary shall establish the shape, form, and design of each HIRE Vets Medallion Award, except that the Award shall be in the form of a certificate and shall state the year for which it was awarded.

## SEC. 4. DISPLAY OF AWARD.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The recipient of a HIRE Vets Medallion Award may—

(1) publicly display such Award through the end of the calendar year following receipt of such Award; and

(2) publicly display the HIRE Vets Medallion Award Certificate issued in conjunction with such Award.

(b) UNLAWFUL DISPLAY PROHIBITED.—It is unlawful for any employer to publicly display a HIRE Vets Medallion Award, in connection with, or as a part of, any advertisement, solicitation, business activity, or product—

(1) for the purpose of conveying, or in a manner reasonably calculated to convey, a false impression that the employer received the Award through the HIRE Vets Medallion Award Program, if such employer did not receive such Award through the HIRE Vets Medallion Award Program; or

(2) for the purpose of conveying, or in a manner reasonably calculated to convey, a false impression that the employer received the Award through the HIRE Vets Medallion Award Program for a year for which such employer did not receive such Award.

## SEC. 5. APPLICATION FEE AND FUNDING.

(a) FUND ESTABLISHED.—There is established in the Treasury of the United States a fund to be designated the “HIRE Vets Medallion Award Fund”. Amounts appropriated to the fund pursuant to subsection (c) shall remain available until expended.

(b) FEE AUTHORIZED.—The Secretary may assess a reasonable fee on employers that apply for receipt of a HIRE Vets Medallion Award and the Secretary shall deposit such fees into the HIRE Vets Medallion Award Fund. The Secretary shall establish the amount of the fee such that the amounts collected as fees and deposited into the Fund are sufficient to cover the costs associated with carrying out this Act.