

12/12/2007 Moran: Guard and Reserve to Receive Improved Benefits

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Legislation Enhances Retirement and Education Benefits

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Congressman Jerry Moran today announced passage of historic changes to modernize retirement and education benefits for National Guard and Reserve members. The measures were passed in the annual policy and funding blueprint for the Department of Defense. The 2008 National Defense Authorization Act, H.R. 1585, now awaits Senate passage and the President's signature to become law.

"Citizen soldiers from communities across Kansas are playing an increasingly critical role in our nation's defense, from Iraq and Afghanistan to our country's borders," Moran said. "These enhanced benefits have been a long time coming and I am glad my colleagues in Congress are recognizing the contributions of our Reserve component, especially since September 11. This is a good start to addressing the inequalities and encouraging the recruitment and retention of National Guard and Reserve members. However, more work must be done to support our citizen soldiers. The greater requirements our nation has placed on the Guard and Reserve must be matched with greater commitment to them on our part."

The 2008 National Defense Authorization Act reduces the age at which a member of the Guard and Reserve can draw retirement pay by three months for every 90 days of federal active duty service. This bill will enable members to retire as early as age 50. Unlike active duty forces who may receive retirement pay immediately upon completion of 20 years of service, Guard and Reserve members were previously ineligible until age 60. Moran led more than 75 of his colleagues in insisting this provision be included in the bill. Moran is also an original sponsor of legislation to lower the retirement age for Guard and Reserve members.

The bill also includes two important changes to G.I. Bill benefits. The G.I. Bill, originally authored by Kansas Legionnaire Harry Colmery in 1944, has provided education benefits to millions of veterans. However, the value of the Reserve component G.I. Bill has fallen behind the active duty benefit, and unlike active duty members, members of the Reserve component must forfeit their earned educational benefits upon separation from service. This week's bill allows Guard and

Reserve members to use their educational benefits for 10 years after separation from service. The bill also allows members of the Reserve component with three cumulative years of active duty service to qualify for education benefits at 80 percent of the active duty rate. Previously, two years of consecutive service was required to receive these benefits.

Moran is a senior member of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, which has been holding a series of hearings on improving Guard and Reserve education benefits.

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