

July 2020

H.R. 7111 – VETERAN ECONOMIC RECOVERY ACT

POSITION: The Chamber's Defense, Veterans & Military Affairs Committee voted to SUPPORT the bill on July 1, 2020. The Chamber's Public Policy Committee voted to SUPPORT the bill on July 14, 2020. The Chamber's Board of Directors voted to SUPPORT the bill on July 23, 2020.

RATIONALE: The COVID-19 pandemic has exasperated unemployment, including an increase in veteran unemployment. Creating a pathway for veterans to more easily enter the workforce remains a Chamber priority.

STATUS: The bill was introduced by Rep. David Roe [TN-1] on June 4, 2020 and referred to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the House Committee on Ways & Means. Companion legislation in the Senate, S. 3898 was introduced by Sen. Dan Sullivan [AK] on June 4, 2020 and referred to the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs'.

SUMMARY

The Veteran Economic Recovery Act directs the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to implement a rapid retaining program for unemployed veterans ages 25-60. This program would provide funding for up to 12 months of job training for high-demand occupations or qualifying high technology programs. The program will be open to no more than 35,000 veterans. Within 30 days of passage of this legislation, the VA would be required enter into an agreement with a federally funded research and development corporation or another appropriate entity to complete a study to determine which occupations are high-demand occupations. After the study is published, there will be a 60 day period to add or remove occupations based on the findings of the report, at the discretion of the Secretary. This list will be used to determine the covered education programs for rapid retraining.

INDUSTRY/IES IMPACTED

Veterans and the businesses who hire veterans would be directly impacted by this bill.

SUPPORTERS

- Co-Sponsors – Bipartisan House members
- Veterans of the Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW)
- The American Legion
- Disabled American Veterans (DAV)
- Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA)
- American Veterans (AMVETS)
- Student Veterans of America (SVA)
- 11 other Veteran Service Organizations

OPPONENTS

- None known

ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR

- The COVID-19 pandemic has had adverse effects on veteran employment. Based on data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, veteran unemployment rose from 4.1 to 11.7 percent in April 2020.
- San Diego has the largest concentration of U.S. military personnel in the world, representing a major economic driver for the region, and has the third highest concentration of veterans in the country.

ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION

- The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) Cost Estimate is unknown.
- Completion of the program does not necessarily guarantee a job. Veterans must find a job within 180 days of completion of the program.

- This program helps unemployed veterans reskill themselves for jobs that need to be filled in high-demand industries.
- San Diego has a rich high technology and life sciences job market, so this legislation has potential to positively impact the region.

MORE INFORMATION

In order to be eligible for the rapid retraining program, veterans must be: unemployed when they apply, have an honorable or other than dishonorable discharge, not be eligible for another VA education benefit, not be enrolled in any other federal or state job training program, not be receiving disability compensation for reasons that led to unemployment, and not be in receipt of any unemployment benefits when the rapid training program begins. This legislation would also apply to members of the National Guard or Reserves who were activated to assist with the COVID-19 response, as long as they meet the program eligibility requirements.