

S.1315

Title: An act to amend title 38, United States Code, to enhance veterans' insurance and housing benefits, to improve benefits and services for transitioning servicemembers, and for other purposes.

Sponsor: [Sen Akaka, Daniel K.](#) [HI] (introduced 5/7/2007) [Cosponsors](#)
(1)

Latest Major Action: 4/24/2008 Held at the desk.

Senate Reports: [110-148](#)

[http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d110:SN1315:](http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d110:SN1315)

SUMMARY AS OF:

8/29/2007--Reported to Senate amended. (There is 1 [other summary](#))

Veterans' Benefits Enhancement Act of 2007 - **Title I: Insurance Matters** - (Sec. 101) Directs the Secretary of Veterans Affairs (Secretary) to grant level-premium, term life insurance to each veteran less than 65 years old who has a service-connected disability and who seeks such insurance, with a maximum coverage amount of \$50,000. Reduces the coverage amount by 80% once the veteran turns 70 and prohibits charging a premium in such a case.

(Sec. 102) Allows administrative costs of the Service-Disabled Veterans' Insurance program to be paid through premiums.

(Sec. 103) Includes all (currently, only certain active-duty) members of the Individual Ready Reserve under the Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI) program.

(Sec. 104) Increases from \$20,000 to \$30,000 the maximum amount of supplemental service disabled veterans' insurance for totally disabled veterans.

(Sec. 105) Amends the Veterans' Housing Opportunity and Benefits Improvement Act of 2006 to provide retroactive traumatic injury coverage under SGLI for members of the Armed Forces who, between October 7, 2001, and December 1, 2005, incurred a traumatic injury in the line of duty. (Current law allows retroactive coverage, during the same period, for members who incurred a traumatic injury in Operations Enduring Freedom or Iraqi Freedom.)

(Sec. 106) Allows the schedule of payments under SGLI for a traumatic injury to distinguish between the severity of a loss of a dominant hand and a non-dominant hand.

(Sec. 107) Requires the Secretary of Defense to develop a form for the designation of a recipient of funds for traumatic injury coverage under SGLI

in cases where the member is mentally incapacitated or experiencing an extended loss of consciousness.

(Sec. 108) Increases from \$90,000 to \$150,000, then to \$200,000 after January 1, 2012, the maximum loan guarantee amount under the veterans' mortgage life insurance program.

Title II: Housing Matters - (Sec. 201) Authorizes the Secretary, in the case of a member determined to have a total and permanent disability incurred or aggravated in the line of active duty, to furnish home improvements and structural alterations for the member for such disability while the member is hospitalized or receiving outpatient care, medical services, or treatment, if the Secretary determines that the member is likely to be discharged or released from the Armed Forces due to the disability.

(Sec. 202) Makes eligible for specially adapted housing benefits and assistance: (1) members of the Armed Forces with certain severe service-connected disabilities; and (2) veterans with such disabilities who are residing outside the United States.

(Sec. 203) Authorizes the provision of specially adapted housing assistance for a disabled veteran whose disability is due to a severe burn injury.

(Sec. 204) Authorizes the provision through 2011 of specially adapted housing assistance for disabled members residing temporarily in housing owned by a family member.

(Sec. 205) Authorizes the Secretary, whenever a payment for specially adapted housing benefits for a disabled veteran is made, to pay such individual supplemental assistance, within limits depending on the severity of the disability, for such acquisition or adaptation. Provides for an annual inflation adjustment of the maximum available amount of such supplemental funds. Authorizes appropriations.

(Sec. 206) Directs the Secretary to report to the congressional veterans' committees on the: (1) adequacy of Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) authorities for providing specially adapted housing assistance for disabled veterans; and (2) advisability of providing such assistance for individuals who reside on a permanent basis in housing owned by a family member.

Title III: Labor and Education Matters - (Sec. 301) Directs the Secretary to ensure the coordination of educational course approval activities by state approving agencies with approval activities performed by the Departments of Labor and Education and other appropriate entities. Requires a report from the Secretary to the veterans' committees on actions taken to establish outcome-oriented performance standards and a tracking and reporting system for resources for approving agencies.

(Sec. 302) Sets \$19 million as the maximum amount per fiscal year, after FY2008, for reimbursement to state and local agencies administering veterans' education benefits.

(Sec. 303) Authorizes the Secretary to waive, for public interest purposes on a case-by-case basis, the residency requirement for a Director for Veterans' Employment and Training.

(Sec. 304) Includes veterans of the Post 9/11 Global War on Terror within an annual (currently, biennial) veterans' unemployment study.

(Sec. 305) Amends the Veterans Benefits Improvement Act of 2004 to extend through 2009 an increase in benefits for veterans pursuing apprenticeships or on-job training.

Title IV: Filipino World War II Veterans Matters - (Sec. 401) Deems certain service performed before July 1, 1946, in the organized military forces of the Philippines and the Philippine Scouts as active military service for purposes of eligibility for veterans' benefits through the VA.

(Sec. 402) Entitles children of Filipino veterans to the same rate (currently, 50%) of educational assistance entitlement as children of other veterans.

Title V: Court Matters - (Sec. 501) Eliminates the 180-day per-year limit on service of retired judges of the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims (Court) who voluntarily return to such service. Establishes a three-tiered retirement pay structure for Court judges appointed after the enactment of this Act. Requires recalled judges to receive the pay of current judges during the period of recall, less the amount of any applicable annuity. Prohibits recall service in excess of five years for judges recalled involuntarily.

(Sec. 502) Removes the \$30 annual limit on practice and registration fees for those admitted to practice before the Court. Requires any fees charged to be reasonable.

(Sec. 503) Requires an annual report from the chief judge to the veterans' committees summarizing the Court's workload.

(Sec. 504) Expresses the sense of Congress that the Court should be provided with appropriate office space, without undue disruption, inconvenience, or cost. Requires a report from the Administrator of General Services to the veterans' committees on the feasibility of leasing additional space for the Court, and on using the entire building in which the Court is housed as a Veterans Courthouse and Justice Center.

Title VI: Compensation and Pension Matters - (Sec. 601) Adds osteoporosis to the list of diseases presumed to be service-connected (and

therefore compensable) with respect to former prisoners of war suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

(Sec. 602) Establishes an annual cost-of-living adjustment, by the same percentage as increases under title II (Old Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance) of the Social Security Act, for the temporary payment of dependency and indemnity compensation (DIC) to a veteran's surviving spouse with one or more children under age 18.

(Sec. 603) Provides that veterans who qualify for a service pension based upon age (65) are not therefore automatically eligible to receive a special monthly pension based upon disability, but instead must qualify for the latter pension under the criteria of being totally and permanently disabled, housebound, or requiring aid and attendance.

Title VII: Burial and Memorial Matters - (Sec. 701) Authorizes and directs the Secretary to pay a supplemental benefit for the burial and funeral expenses of veterans. Makes such benefit an additional: (1) \$900, in the case of a non-service-connected death; or (2) \$2,100, in the case of a service-connected death. Prohibits any additional payment if funds appropriated for such purpose have been expended. Provides for an annual increase in such benefit, based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI). Requires the Secretary to periodically estimate, and report to the veterans' and appropriations committees on, the funding needed to provide such benefit. Authorizes appropriations.

(Sec. 702) Authorizes and directs the Secretary to pay a supplemental burial plot allowance for veterans eligible for the current allowance. Makes such benefit an additional \$445, adjusted annually based on the CPI. Requires the Secretary to periodically estimate, and report to the veterans' and appropriations committees on, the funding needed to provide such benefit. Authorizes appropriations.

Title VIII: Other Matters - (Sec. 801) Authorizes the provision of specially adapted housing assistance for disabled veterans whose disability is due to a severe burn injury.

(Sec. 802) Authorizes the Secretary to pay a supplemental benefit, for assistance in the purchase of automobiles and other conveyances, for disabled veterans currently eligible for such assistance. Provides a cap of \$22,484 per veteran for the total of the current and supplemental assistance, with an annual adjustment based on the average retail cost of new automobiles. Requires the Secretary to periodically estimate, and report to the veterans' and appropriations committees on, the funding needed to provide such benefit. Authorizes appropriations.

(Sec. 803) Revises provisions concerning the VA's program of outreach to veterans to: (1) include members of the National Guard and reserves; and

(2) define "outreach" as the proactive provision of information, services, and benefits counseling to veterans, and to the spouses, children, and parents of veterans who may be eligible to receive benefits through the VA.

(Sec. 804) Amends the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to allow members of the Armed Forces who are called to active duty for a period of not less than 90 days to cancel or suspend their cell phone contracts without incurring early termination or reactivation fees if their ability to fulfill the service contract will be materially affected by such deployment.

(Sec. 805) Directs the Medical Follow-Up Agency of the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies to maintain and manage the assets (including electronic data files and biological specimens of study participants) transferred to the Agency from the Air Force Health Study. Authorizes the Agency, during FY2007-FY2011, to conduct additional research on such assets toward the goal of understanding the determinants of health, and promoting wellness, in veterans. Requires an Agency report to Congress assessing the feasibility and advisability of conducting additional research on such assets after the end of FY2011. Provides funding.

(Sec. 806) Requires: (1) the Secretary to contract with the Institute, above, to conduct a comprehensive epidemiological study to identify any increased risk of developing multiple sclerosis as a result of service in the Persian Gulf or in the Post 9/11 global operations theaters; and (2) an interim and final results report from the Institute to the Secretary and the veterans' committees.

(Sec. 807) Directs the Comptroller General to report to the veterans' and appropriations committees on the adequacy of DIC for surviving spouses and dependents of veterans who die from service-connected disabilities.

U.S. Senate Roll Call Votes 110th Congress - 2nd Session
as compiled through Senate LIS by the Senate Bill Clerk under the direction of the
Secretary of the Senate
Vote Summary

Question: On Passage of the Bill (S.1315 as Amended)

Vote 112 **Vote Date:** April 24, 2008, 12:39 PM

Number:

Required For 1/2 **Vote Result:** Bill Passed
Majority:

Measure [S. 1315](#) (Veterans' Benefits Enhancement Act of 2007)
Number:

Measure An act to amend title 38, United States Code, to enhance veterans'
Title: insurance and housing benefits, to improve benefits and services for
transitioning servicemembers, and for other purposes.

Vote YEAs 96

Counts:

NAYs	1
Not Voting	3

[Vote Summary](#)[By Senator Name](#)[By Vote Position](#)[By Home State](#)

 Alphabetical by Senator Name

Akaka (D-HI), Yea	Domenici (R-NM), Yea	Menendez (D-NJ), Yea
Alexander (R-TN), Yea	Dorgan (D-ND), Yea	Mikulski (D-MD), Yea
Allard (R-CO), Yea	Durbin (D-IL), Yea	Murkowski (R-AK), Yea
Barrasso (R-WY), Yea	Ensign (R-NV), Yea	Murray (D-WA), Yea
Baucus (D-MT), Yea	Enzi (R-WY), Yea	Nelson (D-FL), Yea
Bayh (D-IN), Yea	Feingold (D-WI), Yea	Nelson (D-NE), Yea
Bennett (R-UT), Yea	Feinstein (D-CA), Yea	Obama (D-IL), Not Voting
Biden (D-DE), Yea	Graham (R-SC), Yea	Pryor (D-AR), Yea
Bingaman (D-NM), Yea	Grassley (R-IA), Yea	Reed (D-RI), Yea
Bond (R-MO), Yea	Gregg (R-NH), Yea	Reid (D-NV), Yea
Boxer (D-CA), Yea	Hagel (R-NE), Yea	Roberts (R-KS), Yea
Brown (D-OH), Yea	Harkin (D-IA), Yea	Rockefeller (D-WV), Yea
Brownback (R-KS), Yea	Hatch (R-UT), Yea	Salazar (D-CO), Yea
Bunning (R-KY), Yea	Hutchison (R-TX), Yea	Sanders (I-VT), Yea
Burr (R-NC), Yea	Inhofe (R-OK), Yea	Schumer (D-NY), Yea
Byrd (D-WV), Yea	Inouye (D-HI), Yea	Sessions (R-AL), Yea
Cantwell (D-WA), Yea	Isakson (R-GA), Yea	Shelby (R-AL), Yea
Cardin (D-MD), Yea	Johnson (D-SD), Yea	Smith (R-OR), Yea
Carper (D-DE), Yea	Kennedy (D-MA), Yea	Snowe (R-ME), Yea
Casey (D-PA), Yea	Kerry (D-MA), Yea	Specter (R-PA), Yea
Chambliss (R-GA), Yea	Klobuchar (D-MN), Yea	Stabenow (D-MI), Yea
Clinton (D-NY), Yea	Kohl (D-WI), Yea	Stevens (R-AK), Yea
Coburn (R-OK), Yea	Kyl (R-AZ), Yea	Sununu (R-NH), Yea
Cochran (R-MS), Yea	Landrieu (D-LA), Yea	Tester (D-MT), Yea
Coleman (R-MN), Yea	Lautenberg (D-NJ), Yea	Thune (R-SD), Yea
Collins (R-ME), Yea	Leahy (D-VT), Yea	Vitter (R-LA), Nay
Conrad (D-ND), Yea	Levin (D-MI), Yea	Voinovich (R-OH), Yea
Corker (R-TN), Yea	Lieberman (ID-CT), Yea	Warner (R-VA), Yea
Cornyn (R-TX), Yea	Lincoln (D-AR), Yea	Webb (D-VA), Yea
Craig (R-ID), Yea	Lugar (R-IN), Yea	Whitehouse (D-RI), Yea
Crapo (R-ID), Yea	Martinez (R-FL), Yea	Wicker (R-MS), Yea
DeMint (R-SC), Not Voting	McCain (R-AZ), Not Voting	W
Dodd (D-CT), Yea	McCaskill (D-MO), Yea	
Dole (R-NC), Yea	McConnell (R-KY), Yea	