

Talking Paper
on
70% Program Legislation

In October, the House overwhelmingly passed H.R. 2074, the Veterans Sexual Assault Prevention and Health Care Enhancement Act, which includes provisions to allow flexibility in payments by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs for care to service-connected disabled veterans in State Veterans Homes. This would fix the payment problem connected to providing nursing home care for service connected disabled veterans. The current law applicable to service connected disabled veterans has denied State Veterans Home nursing care to many of these veterans who are most needy and deserving of care. There is agreement by all parties, including the VA, that this must be fixed, and that H.R. 2074 is a relatively easy and cost-free way of fixing the problem.

This same provision has also been reported unanimously by the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee as section 109 of S. 914, the Veterans Programs Improvement Act of 2011, but it is awaiting Senate action.

We understand that Senator Burr of North Carolina, the Ranking Member of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, is holding up consideration of H.R. 2074 in an effort to pass an unrelated bill, S. 277, the Caring for Camp Lejeune Veterans Act of 2011. We have no objection to or position on S. 277; however, this bill has nothing to do with the urgently needed relief for State Veterans Homes, or the sexual assault prevention or traumatic brain injury provisions in H.R. 2074, and it should not be the cause for delaying or preventing the enactment of the important provisions already included in H.R. 2074.

H.R. 2074 is revenue neutral -- it does not increase costs to the Federal Treasury.

H.R. 2074 also has bipartisan support and it would provide major benefits to veterans that should not be delayed.

We are asking local Veteran Service Organizations throughout the nation to urge their Senators to communicate their support for prompt passage of H.R. 2074 to Senator Burr (Republicans) or Senator Murray (Democrats), and please let them know that the enactment of H.R. 2074 this year is important to veterans in their state and to State Veterans Homes nationwide.