



DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS

*Building Better Lives for America's Disabled Veterans*

July 20, 2006

TO: House Government Reform Committee

Dear Representative :

On behalf of the Disabled American Veterans (DAV), I write to express our serious concerns about several bills recently introduced that could seriously endanger veterans' programs and services.

As you know, your committee recently held a hearing on two bills, H.R. 5766, the Government Efficiency Act, and H.R. 3283, the Abolishment of Obsolete Agencies and Federal Sunset Act of 2005, and will be marking up this legislation today. Other similar bills introduced are H.R. 3277 and provisions in S. 3521. The purpose of these bills is to create "sunset commissions," which are unelected commissions with power to recommend radical changes to, or even the continuance or termination of, existing government programs. Such recommendations could be granted expedited consideration in both the House and Senate, and may not be amendable on the floor. The recommendations could be amended in congressional committees of jurisdiction within a limited time frame, but if the time frame was not met, the recommendations would move automatically to a floor vote.

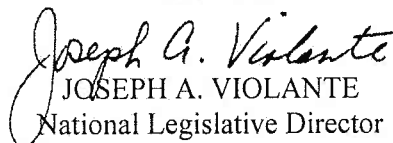
While these bills do not specifically target veterans' programs, they certainly could seriously jeopardize programs affecting disabled veterans and their families. We see no justification whatsoever to subject veterans' programs to the whims of an unelected, uninformed commission that may not appreciate our nation's obligation to care for its veterans. The key point is that to terminate or change an existing program, the authorizing committee or the Congress must follow the rules, hold hearings, take votes, and, in general, operate in a democratic manner.

For the most part, disabilities and injuries suffered by servicemembers while serving in the Armed Services are life-long disabilities. These brave men and women carry the physical and mental scars throughout their lifetime. Veterans programs are designed to provide needed benefits and service throughout their life.

Therefore, I strongly urge you to oppose these bills. Until Congress elevates veterans programs to a national priority and stops trying to erode our benefits or treat them like a welfare program, we will continue to fight legislation that we believe is not in the best interest of veterans.

I am willing to meet with you or your staff to discuss our concerns on these bills.

Sincerely,

  
JOSEPH A. VIOLANTE  
National Legislative Director

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c: House Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Buyer  
House Veterans' Affairs Committee Ranking Member Filner