



NEWS from U.S. Senator Bob Dole

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DOLE PRAISES SENATE PASSAGE OF BILL PREVENTING AUTOMATIC ELIGIBILITY FOR VETERANS

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Senator Bob Dole today praised Senate passage of legislation that prevents automatic eligibility for veterans' benefits by individuals whose discharges have been upgraded as a result of President Carter's special discharge program. Dole, who authored similar legislation, said it would help ensure that "veterans whose military service was less than honorable are not placed on an equal footing with those men and women who served this nation faithfully and honorably."

Following are excerpts from Senator Dole's floor statement supporting the bill:

The Senator from Kansas has had a long-time concern about what might result from the Carter program to automatically upgrade discharges and strongly questions whether someone who failed to serve this country, deserted, or otherwise ignored his responsibility, should now automatically qualify for veterans' benefits.

On June 24, 1977, during Senate consideration of the HUD appropriations bill, I offered an amendment that would have prevented funds appropriated in that Act from being spent for any payment or benefit by virtue of the special review program. This measure would have provided a stop-gap to the automatic awarding of upgraded discharges and benefits while Congress considered and debated the question of benefits. However, based on the assurance of the Chairman of the Committee of Veterans Affairs, the Senator from California, that a bill addressing this problem would be immediately acted upon by the Committee, I withdrew my amendment.

As a result of a meeting I attended yesterday with the distinguished Senators, Thurmond and Cranston, Congressman Robin Beard, and representatives of several veterans organizations, the Senator from Kansas is convinced that S.1307 has been thoroughly considered, and developed with an approach that offers responsible compromises between the Carter program and the so-called Beard amendment in the HUD Conference Report.

In view of the fact that there is no indication from President Carter that S.1307 would be enacted into law if passed by Congress, the retention of the Beard amendment in the HUD Conference Report is crucial if we are to be assured for the time being, that no individual, solely because of existing criteria, will be entitled to veterans benefits.