



We exist to help those who cannot help themselves

STATEMENT OF
CHARLES A. SUSINO
ON BEHALF OF
CHARLES SUSINO, JR.
NATIONAL COMMANDER/
LEGISLATIVE OFFICER
OF THE
AMERICAN EX-PRISONERS OF WAR
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEES ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
U.S. SENATE/U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, D.C.
MARCH 6, 2018

Chairmen and members of the House and Senate Veteran's Affairs committee and guests, my name is Charles A. Susino, National Director of the American Ex-Prisoners of War. I am speaking today on behalf of my father, National Commander Charles Susino, Jr. Many of you know him from his previous testimony over the years. My dad joins me in thanking you for the opportunity to express our comments today.

We are grateful for your efforts over this past year. This Congress has stepped up and passed several key pieces of legislation in support of our veterans with respect to health care, compensation, and public awareness in the case of approving a location for the Operation Desert Storm memorial. Your time is scarce and other major Congressional agendas often displace the attention on veterans' needs so we ask for your patience, persistence, and unwavering support.

Several pieces of new legislation are important and continually improving all facets of the Veterans Administration operation is necessary. We often speak at this hearing about how the VA needs to improve and model its methods about particular successful and efficient industries. We need to get to where we use the term operational excellence and VA in the same sentence. For an organization that large it takes time, but we need to focus on select areas to build some successes to point at.

Our legislative agenda has been very consistent year to year. It is based on the earned benefits of the veteran for serving their country, never using the word "entitlements" in the same sentence as veteran. Its center is healthcare and fair compensation to the veteran and their family.

Studies of society conclude the country's population is getting older. That is also true of the veterans as well, especially those that served in WWII, Korea, and Vietnam. The typical WWII veteran is in their 90's along with their spouse and as people are living longer so does our veteran and this creates some unique challenges for the VA. In our organization, we have members in that age group. I am always surprised how little is actually provided for the elderly veterans who are sickly, even those with 100% rating disability.

In 1986, Congress and the President mandated VA health care for veterans with service connected disabilities as well as other special groups of veterans. It included veterans up to WWI, some 58 years after the end of the war. WWII ended over 72 years ago. We have asked you for the better part of the last decade to revisit the special groups and update to include veterans of WWII, Korea, Vietnam, Cold War, and our recent conflicts in the Middle East. We have requested for many years with no movement on the part of Congress. With President Trump's support of our military, this President may see it appropriate and fair treatment for those that have kept our country free.

We also draw your attention to several bills which we believe have special merit and request your active support.

H.R. 27: Ensuring VA Employee Accountability Act. All veterans in all VA facilities deserve adequate care from VA employees.

H.R. 4369: To amend title 38, United States Code, to codify the authority of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to assign a disability rating of total to a veteran by reason of unemployability, and for other purposes

H.R. 299 and S. 422 : To amend title 38, United States Code, to clarify presumptions relating to the exposure of certain veterans who served in the vicinity of the Republic of Vietnam, and for other purposes.

H.R. 303 and S.66: To amend title 10, United States Code, to permit additional retired members of the Armed Forces who have a service-connected disability to receive both disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs for their disability and either retired pay by reason of their years of military service or combat-related special compensation.

S. 339: A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to repeal the requirement for reduction of survivor annuities under the Survivor Benefit Plan by veterans' dependency and indemnity compensation, and for other purposes.

HR 1472 and S. 591: Military and Veteran Caregiver Services Improvement Act of 2017

S. 1990: Dependency and Indemnity Compensation Improvement Act of 2017

S. 544: A bill to amend the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 to modify the termination date for the Veterans Choice Program, and for other purposes.

Thank you for your time and attention and most importantly your unwavering support of ex-POWs and all veterans – deserving heroes every one.

God bless our troops
God bless America

---Remember---

Charles Susino, Jr.
National Commander/Legislative Director
American Ex-Prisoners of War