

Ranking Member Richard Burr

UNITED STATES SENATE
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Markup of Pending Legislation

May 21, 2009

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Good morning, Mr. Chairman. Before we go forward, I'd like to thank you for the level of cooperation you and your staff have shown in assembling the 7 bills on today's agenda.

This Committee has a proud history of bipartisanship. And the fact that we are about to unanimously approve such a comprehensive agenda is a testament to your leadership.

My hope now is that we can encourage the rest of our Senate colleagues to pass these bills in the same manner that they'll soon be approved by the Committee today...unanimous, en bloc, and without any disagreement.

The breadth of legislation we're about to approve is impressive, and I had the privilege of sponsoring or co-sponsoring provisions in all these bills:

S. 475, the Military Spouses Residency Relief Act, would reduce some of the hassels and confusion military spouses experience every time a servicemember is ordered to a new duty station;

S. 801 includes a provision to provide the much-needed assistance to the family caregivers of seriously injured veterans, like Eric Edmundson from North Carolina, who might otherwise require nursing home care;

S. 728 includes two of my bills; one would improve the quality of life of veterans with Traumatic Brain Injuries who require regular aid and attendance by increasing their monthly income to pay for the help they need; and the other would ensure that certain veterans who are medically retired from military service receive their disability checks without delay after separation.

S. 423 would set the stage for Congress to fund VA's healthcare system a year in advance;

S. 669, would give veterans due process rights before their names could be sent to a government database for criminals that is used to strip individuals of their 2nd Amendment rights

S. 252 would give VA more tools to hire and retain doctors and nurses; improve healthcare for women veterans; and would test the concept of providing veterans and survivors with a voluntary dental insurance plan; and finally.....

S. 407 would increase veterans and survivors compensation to account for any inflation

Mr. Chairman, I think veterans and their families will be proud of the Committee's work today. Again, thank you for your cooperation.

One final note, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank you for agreeing to my request to hold a hearing on the mistakes that were made during VA endoscopy procedures at several of its facilities. Veterans place their trust in VA to first "do no harm." It troubles me that their trust was put at risk. I'm glad we're going to get some answers to first understand the scope of the problem, then review VA's plans to ensure it never occurs again.

I yield back