



Voices for Veterans Act

Our country has an obligation to serve and support our veterans as well as they have served us. Congress and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs have long recognized that meeting this commitment demands particular attention to the needs of our minority veterans, who comprise nearly 21 percent of all veterans in the United States. To reflect the growing diversity of this population, Congresswoman DelBene believes additional action is needed to ensure the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) veterans are being met.

Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans

Chartered on November 2, 1994, the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans (ACMV) advises the Secretary of Veterans Affairs on the needs of minority veterans with respect to compensation, health care, rehabilitation, outreach, and other VA benefits and services. The ACMV is charged with assessing the needs of our nation's 4.7 million minority veterans and recommending program improvements to meet their specific needs. Committee members are appointed by the Secretary to two or three-year terms.

The current authorization for the ACMV is set to expire on December 31, 2015.

The Voices for Veterans Act

More than 1 million LGBT veterans have served our nation, and many of these heroes continue to face unique challenges and discriminatory laws that prevent full access to VA benefits and services. Unfortunately, under current law, LGBT veterans are not considered "minority group members" for the purposes of the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans.

In 2010, Congress modified the composition of the ACMV to include post-9/11 women veterans, in an effort to more fully reflect the diversity of the veteran community. With this same goal in mind, the *Voices for Veterans Act* reauthorizes the Committee for two years and extends its composition and reach to include LGBT veterans, to ensure the ACMV's assessments and recommendations to the VA Secretary reflect the needs of this growing population.

The bill has received endorsements from Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), Human Rights Campaign, The American Military Partner Association, OutServe-SLDN, Military Partners and Families Coalition (MPFC), and American Veterans for Equal Rights.

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