

Braley Introduces Bill to Fix Troop Pay Problem

Today, Rep. Bruce Braley (D-Iowa) introduced The Guaranteed Benefits for Our Troops Act, a bill which would fix a problem in the provision of leave benefits for members of the Iowa National Guard. The Guaranteed Benefits for Our Troops Act would ensure that Iowa National Guard troops are provided the leave benefits they have been promised under the Department of Defense's Post Deployment and Mobilization Respite Absence (PDMRA) program.

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850 Iowa National Guard members, and 20,000 troops nationwide, have not received their earned leave benefits due to a delay between the announcement of the new PDMRA program and the establishment of the program by the individual military services. The bill introduced by Braley would allow the Defense Department (DoD) to retroactively reimburse soldiers who were left out during that period.

"A bureaucratic glitch should not prevent our troops from receiving the benefits they are due," Braley said. "Iowa's 1st Battalion, 133rd Infantry bravely served the longest tour of any ground combat unit in Iraq, and we owe it to them to fix this problem quickly and provide them with the benefits they deserve. The Guaranteed Benefits for Our Troops Act will ensure that these soldiers, and other affected troops nationwide, promptly receive the benefits they have been promised by the DoD."

PDMRA leave was designed to provide service members who were deployed beyond established rotation cycles to Iraq and Afghanistan additional time to reintegrate back into civilian life, as well as to help retain soldiers who experienced long tours. The PDMRA's implementation delay varied from service to service. The Department of the Army issued its corresponding policy for implementing PDMRA more than six months after DoD's January 19, 2007 issuance date. Thousands of National Guard and Army Reserve soldiers failed to receive proper compensation for their PDMRA leave during this implementation gap, and are still waiting to receive this benefit, months after returning home.

Congressman Braley introduced the Guaranteed Benefits for Our Troops Act with the support of the entire Iowa and Minnesota Congressional Delegations. A companion bill was introduced last week in the Senate by Senators Grassley, Klobuchar and Wyden.