

ROA gains momentum on key healthcare priority in the 118th Congress

Affordable healthcare for early-age reserve component retirees in reach with introduction of the TRICARE Fairness for National Guard and Reserve Retirees Act.

WASHINGTON, D.C., UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, June 5, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- On May 18



Early-age retirees of the Reserve and National Guard served their nation, often in harm's way. They should not have to pay thousands of dollars more for health care than all other military retirees."

ROA executive director, Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Jeffrey Phillips, U.S. Army

and 26, the U.S. Senate and House introduced bicameral, bipartisan legislation that expands access to affordable healthcare for early age reserve component retirees, also referred to as "gray area" retirees.

Public Law No: 110-181, the Fiscal Year 2008 National Defense Authorization Act, reduced the retirement age for certain eligible reserve component servicemembers from age 60 to no less than 50. This was designed to recognize the increased reliance on the Reserve and National Guard in Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom.

Gray area retirees have retired from the military, but have not yet attained the age required for receipt of benefits.

The FY 2008 NDAA did not provide these gray area retirees with access to the same subsidized healthcare benefit(s) offered to all other military retirees. Rather, these patriots are expected to enroll in the TRICARE Retired Reserve program, which requires beneficiaries to cover the full cost of care.

As a result, healthcare is substantially more expensive for all gray area retirees and unaffordable for most.

"Early-age retirees of the Reserve and National Guard served their nation, often in harm's way – just as their active component comrades did. They should not have to pay thousands of dollars more for health care than all other military retirees," said ROA's executive director, retired Maj. Gen. Jeffrey Phillips, U.S. Army. "This bill brings us closer to achieving equity in the military health system and ends penalizing servicemembers who earned their early retirement with deployments to war."

H.R.3668/S.1670, the TRICARE Fairness for National Guard and Reserve Retirees Act, would

eliminate this barrier to service-earned healthcare by aligning the age that retirees begin receiving retirement pay with the age they become eligible for the less costly TRICARE healthcare plans.

In letters to Representatives Bill Johnson and Dean Phillips, and Senators JD Vance and Elizabeth Warren, the champions of these companion measures, Phillips extended thanks and expanded on the need to urgently move this to the president's desk for signature.

"On behalf of the Reserve Organization of America, the only national military organization that solely and exclusively supports the Reserve and National Guard, thank you for your leadership in Congress and sponsorship of H.R.3668, the TRICARE Fairness for National Guard and Reserve Retirees Act," Phillips wrote. "By eliminating this component-centric, congressionally created barrier to healthcare, the TRICARE Fairness for national Guard and Reserve Retirees Act passes our litmus test for support with flying colors."

To read ROA's letter of support for [H.R.3668, click here.](#)

To read ROA's letter of support for [S.1670, click here.](#)

Achieving equity between components in the military health system is ROA's leading legislative priority for the 118th Congress. ROA looks forward to meeting with members and staff on this important issue.

An official copy of ROA's issue paper on this bill can be [found here.](#)

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