

March 9, 2012

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Yesterday, Congressmen Jason Altmire (PA-04), Bobby Schilling (IL-17), and Geoff Davis (KY-04) introduced the Citizen Soldier Equality Act, bipartisan legislation to correct compensation discrepancies for Reservists hurt in the line of duty and awarded the Purple Heart. Under current formulas, these Reservists wounded in action face an inequity in their disability when they are wounded in action.

The Citizen Soldier Equality Act will fix this oversight, correcting the formula so "Years of Service" would equal their full years of service when the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) considers their disability pay. This change in language simply eliminates the inequality between active and reserve personnel for disability retirement pay for those who are wounded while protecting our country.

"When I look at the faces of the brave men and women who were wounded defending their country, the first question that I ask myself is how can we ever begin to repay them, not whether they have active or reserve status," Congressman Altmire said. "This legislation removes an inequality among our military members and provides the support they will need to succeed after bravely serving their country. With thousands of servicemen and women returning home, we should give this bipartisan legislation immediate consideration on the House floor."

"You can tell a lot about a country in how it takes care of its war heroes," Congressman Schilling said. "When warfighters are hurt in the line of duty, they should be compensated regardless of enlistment status. At a time when we are going to be reducing troop numbers and relying more on our Reserve, we must provide the correct compensation for those citizen soldiers who are wounded in the line of duty. I'm proud to introduce this bipartisan effort with Congressmen Davis and Altmire and thank them for their hard work over the years in support of our war heroes."

"I have worked for several years to resolve this inequity, and I am grateful to Congressman Schilling for his willingness to continue the cause," said Congressman Davis. "A bullet does not discriminate between an active and a reserve service member, and neither should we. We owe it to our wounded reservists that their disability retirement pay is calculated the same way it is for active members of the military."

Disability retirement pay is calculated by one of two formulas, one of which contains "Years of Service." "Years of Service" roughly equals total Duty Days divided by 365. As an example of the inequality, a Staff Sergeant with 13 calendar years of reserve service but only 4 years of active service based on "Total Duty Days" gets about 8 percent less disability retirement pay than an active duty soldier. A lifetime delta of 8 percent can significantly impact the Reservists' standard of living. To further illustrate, two personnel – one an active duty soldier, one a Reservist – with identical disabilities incurred in the same conflict receive a different disability retirement benefit, with the Reservist coming up short.

The Citizen Soldier Inequality Act would eliminate the inequality between active and reserve personnel outlined above with regard to the calculation of disability retirement pay for service members wounded in action.