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By Timothy R. Homan, CQ Staff

(Washington, DC) - The House is expected to pass bills Wednesday that would extend the Small Business Administration's authorization for five months and expand small-business benefits to veterans and military reservists.

The temporary extension (HR 4252) - sponsored by Steve Chabot of Ohio, the ranking Republican on the Small Business Committee - would authorize funding at fiscal 2007 levels through May 23, 2008.

The extension would give lawmakers more time to work on a long-term reauthorization. The agency has been operating under a series of short-term extensions. The latest (PL 110-57) expires Dec. 15.

Lawmakers in both chambers have taken a piecemeal approach to reauthorizing SBA programs.

The veterans' bill, sponsored by Jason Altmire, D-Pa., includes provisions similar to a Senate bill (S 1784) sponsored by John Kerry, D-Mass., chairman of the Senate Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee.

It also incorporates language from a similar bill (HR 2366) the House passed by voice vote in June.

Among its provisions, the Altmire bill, still in draft form Tuesday, would authorize \$4.4 million to support Veterans Business Outreach Centers. The centers would be required to participate in transition assistance programs conducted by the Labor Department.

“This legislation will support and expand entrepreneurial opportunities for veterans and reservists to ensure that their livelihoods are not compromised because of their military service,” Altmire said in a statement.

The measure would establish a Women Veterans Business Training Resource Program that would compile and distribute information on resources available to women veterans.

The bill also would provide technical and regulatory assistance to small businesses owned by armed forces reservists.

The SBA would be authorized to award grants of up to \$300,000 annually to outreach centers and assistance programs for administrative assistance - such as management, financing, procurement and regulatory guidance - for reservists.

Another grant provision would allow up to \$250,000 for education and awareness campaigns.

The legislation would extend the deadline for small businesses to apply for economic injury disaster loans as a result of military deployments lasting three months to a year. The Small Business Administration would have the authority to extend that deadline at its discretion.

“While Congress has passed legislation and provided federal agencies with resources to provide entrepreneurial opportunities for veterans, I believe that more can still be done to relieve the burden that is placed on small-business owners during and after deployment,” Altmire said.