

Section 422—Armed Forces Retirement Home

This section would authorize \$61.6 million to be appropriated for the operation of the Armed Forces Retirement Home during fiscal year 2008.

Section 423—Offsetting Transfers from National Defense Stockpile Transaction Fund

This section would transfer \$150.0 million from unobligated balances of the National Defense Stockpile Transaction Fund to the Miscellaneous Receipts of the United States Treasury to pay for direct spending costs arising from section 702 in this Act.

TITLE V—MILITARY PERSONNEL POLICY

OVERVIEW

The committee remains concerned that support for our troops and their families continues to remain a priority, particularly as we enter another year of highly demanding military operations in the Middle East. Many soldiers are facing their third deployment, and Marines have seen four or even five deployments over the past several years. The committee is concerned about the toll these continued deployments have on our armed forces and their families.

As part of the Army's effort to grow the force, the committee proposed to increase the annual limit on the number of Reserve Officer Training Corps scholarships that may be awarded to cadets who serve in the reserve components. The committee is aware that the Department had proposed a provision that would eliminate the annual limit. However, the proposal generated significant mandatory spending that the committee could not overcome to accommodate the request. As a result, the committee proposes a modest increase in the annual limit to help the Army reserve components to grow their officer force to meet the increased demand being placed on the reserve components.

The committee remains committed to ensuring that the personnel policy guidelines established in law remain current, valid, and effective. Accordingly, the committee includes a series of provisions that would improve the process for appointing and accessing officers, clarify mandatory separation and movement policies for senior officers, and facilitate the transition of officers to enlisted status.

The committee also proposes to consolidate the educational assistance programs for service members. The committee recommends that the oversight and administration of the educational assistance program for reserve members be transferred to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs. Currently, the committee maintains authority for the reserve educational assistance program, while the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs maintains authority for the active duty educational assistance program. This has led to disparate treatment in educational benefits between the active and reserve forces. This difference has become a notable point of contention as the reserve components have moved from a reserve strategic force to an operational reserve force. Combining the oversight and responsibility of the active and reserve edu-

cational programs under one committee of jurisdiction will help to ensure fair and equitable treatment for both the active and reserve forces.

The committee continues to make recommendations to improve the quality of life for service members and their families and to recognize the sacrifices these individuals are making in support of worldwide operations. The committee recommends supplemental funding, including \$50.0 million, for local educational agencies that are heavily impacted by the attendance of military dependents, and an additional \$15.0 million for local educational agencies that experience significant increases or decreases in the average daily attendance of military dependent students due to military force structure changes.

Americans continue to show their support and compassion for our troops. Each day, donations for those serving in combat and those who have been wounded or injured in service to our nation continue to pour in from across the country—school children, community organizations, religious organizations, to individuals who just want to do something to “support the troops.” The outpouring of support has been phenomenal and the committee seeks to encourage these efforts by extending the authority for the Secretary of Defense to accept gifts, devices, and bequests that benefit members of the armed forces and helps to improve the quality of life for themselves and their families.

ITEMS OF SPECIAL INTEREST

Access to Member Social Security Numbers

The committee continues to be concerned that commanders and other managers within the Department of Defense are not doing enough to protect the social security numbers of service members. The committee is aware of anecdotal accounts of careless handling of documents with social security numbers, including the posting of rosters on public bulletin boards. Such examples of inappropriate handling of personal data suggest that procedures for controlling documents with member social security numbers are not standardized and are not widely disseminated. Accordingly, the committee directs the Secretary of Defense to review the policies regarding the safeguarding of social security numbers and other personal data within the Department of Defense and develop a more specific standardized policy accompanied by an aggressive Department-wide education program.

The committee directs the Secretary to submit to the congressional defense committees a report, by October 1, 2007, on his findings and recommendations for implementing a standardized policy for safeguarding personal information.

Cost and Impact of Allowing Service Members to Utilize Their GI Bill to Repay Student Loans

The committee directs the Secretary of Defense to review the impact of allowing those service members who qualify to receive GI Bill benefits to use their education benefit to repay student loans for education that would otherwise have qualified under the GI Bill education benefits program. The Secretary should include in the re-

view student loans for which service members owe a debt on past education for which they have received even if the education was obtained prior to the service member entering the military and becoming eligible for the GI Bill.

The purpose of the review is to identify:

(1) The number of service members who will be eligible to receive this benefit;

(2) The overall impact of allowing service members to receive this benefit, to include exhausting their benefits when repaying these student loans;

(3) The estimated cost of allowing service members to receive this benefit; and

(4) The impact of extending the program only to include those service members who are recipients of the Purple Heart and/or those service members that have been injured and not returned to duty and the number of service members that would qualify if this program were limited to those two groups.

The committee directs the Secretary of Defense to provide to the Senate Committee on Armed Services and the House Committee on Armed Services a report on the results of this review no later than 90 days after the date of enactment of this Act.

Deployment Impact on Military Minor Dependents

The committee is concerned that the high deployment tempo of service members is having a detrimental impact on their children. A recent study found that the rate of child abuse among military families, including the reserve component, may increase due to deployments of service members. While there is deep concern regarding the pressures that military families face during deployments, there is a lack of information on how such deployments may contribute to child maltreatment. The committee directs the Secretary of Defense to conduct a study, in consultation with the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, of the level of risks of child abuse and neglect among military minor dependents that may result due to the increased operational tempo of service members. The committee is concerned that the service members of our nation's ground forces in particular may be at highest risk and, therefore, urges the Secretary to focus the review on the impact of deployments on the Army and the Marine Corps. The committee directs the Secretary to submit to the congressional defense committees a report by December 31, 2008, on the findings of the study of the potential impact of deployment on child abuse rates among military families and his assessment and recommendations to address any such potential impact.

Display of the National League of Families POW/MIA Flag at Department of Defense Facilities

The committee notes that section 902 of title 36, United States Code, requires the Department of Defense to display the National League of Families Prisoner of War/Missing in Action (POW/MIA) flag on six occasions annually. The committee further notes that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs voluntarily displays the POW/MIA flag at the Department of Veterans Affairs' headquarters any day on which the flag of the United States is displayed, and, as re-

quired by law, displays the POW/MIA flag at all medical centers of the Department of Veterans Affairs any day on which the flag of the United States is displayed. The committee encourages the Secretary of Defense to consider displaying the POW/MIA flag at the Department of Defense's headquarters and on military installations on any day on which the flag of the United States is displayed.

Increased Funding for Prisoner of War and Missing Personnel Operations

As required by the John Warner National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007 (Public Law 109-364), the Department of Defense budget for fiscal year 2008 provided the committee with a five-year overview of the funding required and the funding requested for the Department's Prisoner of War and Missing Personnel affairs programs. In fiscal year 2008, the budget request would support 91 percent, or \$8.0 million less than, the total funding required. The Department explained the gap as being wholly attributable to the lack of access to North Korea for investigations. Notwithstanding the current lack of access to North Korea, the committee believes that much work remains to be done and can be done in fiscal year 2008 to account for America's prisoner of war and missing personnel from all wars. Therefore, the committee recommends fully supporting those efforts by increasing the amounts requested as follows: \$0.2 million for the Defense POW/MIA Personnel Office, \$7.5 million for the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, and \$0.3 million Air Force Life Sciences Equipment Laboratory.

Increased Military Operations on Guam

The committee notes that the Department of Defense intends to add permanent force structure to the military forces located on Guam and that the Department of Defense and the military departments have been assigning increasing numbers of military members and civilian employees to duty on Guam on a temporary basis. The committee recognizes that the permanent increase in force structure and the continuing presence of a significant number of temporary duty personnel are conditions that require the close coordination of the Department of Defense and the Government of Guam to address the requirements of increased military operations on Guam. Accordingly, the committee directs the Secretary of Defense to review the proposed force structure increases, provide an assessment of the current status of planning efforts to prepare for increased military operations on Guam, and to compile, by military service, data regarding the number of military members who were permanently and temporarily assigned to Guam during each of the fiscal years 2003 through fiscal year 2007.

The committee directs the Secretary to submit to the congressional defense committees a report, by November 30, 2007, on the findings of the review of the proposed force structure increases, his assessment of the planning efforts, and the data compiled on permanent and temporary assignments of military members to Guam.

National Guard Educational Initiatives

The committee is concerned at the numbers of non-prior service personnel enlisting in the National Guard who do not have a high school diploma. The committee understands that the Chief of the National Guard Bureau has begun efforts to assist National Guard recruits who have enlisted without either a high school degree or general equivalency diploma (GED) to obtain a GED. The committee urges the Chief of the National Guard Bureau to consider employing advanced computer assisted instruction and learning management systems, to assist such National Guard recruits to obtain a GED.

Pay and Retirement Service Credit for Students at the Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences and Other Education Programs

The committee is concerned that students at government-funded education programs are receiving disparate treatment with regard to the credit they receive for prior military service while enrolled in the education programs. The committee believes that a thorough review of the personnel status of students in government-funded education programs should be conducted to ensure that students are receiving fair and equitable treatment and that each program is postured to attract sufficient numbers of qualified candidates. The committee directs the Secretary of Defense to review the personnel status of students, the pay, treatment, and service credit of prior service members, the grade and promotion status of all students, the credit for service while attending school in terms of pay, promotion, and retirement, and other factors as determined by the Secretary with regard to the following programs:

- (1) Armed Forces Health Professions Financial Assistance Programs;
- (2) The Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences;
- (3) The program to detail commissioned officers as students at medical schools as authorized in section 536 of the John Warner National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007 (Public Law 109-364);
- (4) Programs that provide for medical school attendance by service academy graduates;
- (5) Programs for members to attain advanced degrees;
- (6) Programs for members to attend law school;
- (7) Senior Reserve Officer Training Corps Programs;
- (8) Service academies; and
- (9) Other educational programs as determined by the Secretary.

The committee directs the Secretary to submit to the Senate Committee on Armed Services and the House Committee on Armed Services a report, by March 31, 2008, on his findings and recommendations regarding the need to legislate changes to personnel policy to ensure fair and equitable treatment of students in government funded education programs and encourage the participation of qualified candidates in those programs.

Review of Privileged or Protected Communications Made by
Victims

In the committee report (H. Rept. 109–452) accompanying the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007, this committee directed the Secretary of Defense to conduct a review to determine when, and to what extent, pretrial investigations under article 32 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice should be closed to spectators, the media, and others in order to protect witnesses and victims of sexual assault or domestic violence. The Secretary of Defense was also directed to conduct a review of privileged or protected communications made by victims of sexual assaults to health care providers and victim advocates. The purpose of the review was to identify whether changes to the Manual for Courts-Martial should be made to extend the privileges that are already included within Section V of the Military Rules of Evidence to include health care providers and victim advocates. The Secretary of Defense was directed to present to the Senate Committee on Armed Services and the House Committee on Armed Services a report detailing the results of the reviews conducted in these areas no later than April 15, 2007. However, that date has passed and the committee has yet to receive these reports. The committee urges the Secretary of Defense to submit these reports in a timely fashion so that Congress can continue its proper oversight and ensure that these issues are addressed in a timely manner.

LEGISLATIVE PROVISIONS

SUBTITLE A—OFFICER PERSONNEL POLICY

Section 501—Assignment of Officers to Designated Positions of
Importance and Responsibility

This section would authorize officers serving in the grades of lieutenant general or vice admiral and general or admiral to continue for up to 60 days to hold those grades following reassignment from positions authorized for those grades, unless sooner placed under orders to another position authorized for those grades.

Section 502—Increase in Years of Commissioned Service Threshold
for Discharge of Probationary Officers and for the Use of Force
Shaping Authority

This section would amend section 630 of title 10, United States Code, to extend the probationary period of active duty and reserve officers to six years of commissioned service from less than five years of commissioned service. Extending the probationary period would allow for involuntary separation prior to six years of commissioned service, rather than forcing the services to retain officers until they twice fail to be selected for promotion to lieutenant commander or major.

Section 503—Special Promotion Authority for Navy Career Military
Professors

This section would amend section 641 of title 10, United States Code, to authorize permanent military professors or career military professors to be appointed to the higher grade of captain, provided

that the individual completes six years of service as a permanent military professor or career military professor. Such appointments would be subject to the President's approval with the advice and consent of the U.S. Senate.

SUBTITLE B—RESERVE COMPONENT MATTERS

Section 511—Mandatory Separation of Reserve Officers in the Grade of Lieutenant General or Vice Admiral after Completion of 38 Years of Commissioned Service

This section would mandate that reserve component officers serving in the grades of lieutenant general or vice admiral be separated from active status upon reaching 38 years of commissioned service. This section would establish a mandatory separation policy that is consistent with the separation of active duty officers in the same grades for years of service.

Section 512—Constructive Service Credit upon Original Appointment of Reserve Officers in Certain Health Care Professions

This section would authorize the Secretary of Defense to grant officer candidates qualified in health care professions that are critically manned within the reserve components with sufficient constructive service credit to be appointed a reserve officer in the grade of captain, or in the Navy Reserve, lieutenant.

Section 513—Maximum Period of Temporary Federal Recognition of Person as Army National Guard Officer or Air Force Reserve Officer

This section would extend the period that members of the national guard may be granted temporary federal recognition from six months to one year.

Section 514—Military Technicians (Dual Status) in the Selected Reserve

This section would enable military technicians (dual status), all of whom must maintain membership in the Selected Reserve as a condition of employment, to continue to be employed as technicians when the loss of that membership is the result of a combat-related disability. This section also would provide the secretaries of the Army and the Air Force temporary authority to fill a military technician (dual status) position that is vacant due to the mobilization of the incumbent with a person who is not a dual status technician. This section also would provide authority to defer mandatory separation of a military technician (dual status) until that person attains eligibility for an unreduced annuity, but not beyond age 62.

Section 515—Working Group on Reintegration of Reserve Component Members Returning from Deployment

This section would require the Secretary of Defense to establish a working group to identify and assess the reintegration needs of members of the reserve components returning from overseas operational deployment, to include the timing and sequencing of reintegration outreach. The committee notes that there are many

programs currently being operated by different services, states, and commands to help returning members of the reserve components make the transition back to civilian life, such as programs in Minnesota, New Hampshire, Oregon, and Washington. The working group will be able to catalog and analyze existing programs, identify best practices, and develop plans to incorporate the best practices across the services.

Section 516—National Guard Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program

This section would require the Secretary of Defense, in coordination with the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, to establish a national combat veteran reintegration program, to be known as the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program. The committee understands that the reserve component has changed from a strategic reserve to an operational reserve, fully engaged in the global war on terror, and that reserve component members face challenges that are inherently different from their counterparts in the active component. Readjusting to civilian life can be extremely challenging for members of the reserve components returning to their families, hometowns, and civilian employment. The active component has recognized the need for programs that address issues for service members returning from combat and has already instituted such programs. However, members of the reserve components return to their hometowns following demobilization and often do not have access to services and resources that allow them to successfully reintegrate back into society.

This section would require the Chief of the National Guard Bureau to establish an Office for Reintegration Programs to administer all reintegration programs in coordination with state national guard organizations. The committee recommends the office be appropriately staffed with full-time National Guard Bureau personnel, military or civilian, for this purpose. Further, the committee recommends that the Office for Reintegration Programs employ full-time personnel to staff the state Deployment Cycle Support Teams to administer the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program at the state level.

The committee recommends that the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program include specific reintegration events and activities to take place during four phases of deployment; Pre-Deployment Phase, Deployment Phase, Demobilization Phase, and Post-Deployment-Reconstitution Phase. Activities and programs should focus on service members and their families but should also include community information sessions to educate community leaders, religious leaders, schools, employers, mental health professionals, and family readiness groups about the challenges of reintegration, and what they can do to assist combat veterans and their families successfully reintegrate back into the community.

Section 517—Advance Notice to Members of Reserve Components of Deployment in Support of Contingency Operations

This section would require the Secretary of Defense to ensure that a member of a reserve component, who will be called or ordered to active duty for a period of more than 30 days in support

of a contingency operation, will be given a minimum of 30 days notice before the mobilization date with a goal of providing 90 days notice before mobilization. The Secretary may waive these requirements or authorize shorter notice during a war or national emergency declared by the President or Congress or to meet mission requirements. If the waiver or reduction is made on account of mission requirements, this section would require the Secretary to provide Congress a report detailing the reasons for the waiver or reduction and the mission requirements at issue.

SUBTITLE C—EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Section 521—Reduction or Elimination of Service Obligation in an Army Reserve or Army National Guard Troop Program Unit for Certain Persons Selected as Medical Students at Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences

This section would authorize the Secretary of the Army to modify agreements entered into by cadets in the Reserve Officers' Training Corps who participate in the Guaranteed Reserve Forces Duty Scholarship Program to allow the member to meet previously-agreed commitments to serve in the reserve components by fulfilling active duty service commitments incurred by the member as a physician following graduation from the Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences.

Section 522—Increase in Annual Limit on Number of ROTC Scholarships under Army Reserve and Army National Guard Program

This section would increase the limitation on the number of Reserve Officers Training Corps scholarships that may be awarded each year from 416 to 424 to cadets who wish to serve in the reserve components of the Army.

Section 523—Revisions to Authority to Pay Tuition for Off-Duty Training or Education

This section would authorize the secretaries of the military departments to pay tuition assistance to certain members of the Ready Reserve who serve in critical occupational specialties and who agree to a specified period of additional service in the ready reserve. The critical occupational specialties would be determined by the secretaries of the military departments.

Section 524—National Defense University Master's Degree Programs

This section would authorize the National Defense University to award a Master of Arts degree in Strategic Security Studies to program graduates at the School for National Security Executive Education. As required by law, the Secretary of Education has formally approved the Master of Arts degree in Strategic Security Studies at the National Defense University.

Section 525—Recodification in Title 38, United States Code, of Certain Educational Assistance Programs for Members of the Reserve Components

This section would recodify sections 1606 and 1607 of title 10, United States Code, to title 38. As of October 1, 2008, payments for educational assistance, under this section, would be made from funds appropriated or otherwise made available to the Department of Veterans Affairs for the payment of readjustment benefits. However, individuals designated by the secretary of the military department concerned, who are given an increased rate of educational benefits due to a skill or specialty in which there is a critical shortage, commonly referred to as a “kicker,” would be funded from amounts in the Department of Defense Education Benefits Fund, but only for that specified amount of increased benefit. This section would require the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to enter into an agreement to transfer the funds from the Department of Defense Education Benefits Fund to the Department of Veterans Affairs to pay for those section 1606 and 1607 benefits which the Department of Veterans Affairs will now be responsible for paying. The funds transferred to the Readjustment Benefits Account of the Department of Veterans Affairs would only be used to pay those section 1606 and 1607 benefits which were earned prior to October 1, 2008. This transfer of funds would be made as quickly as possible to ensure that the Department of Veterans Affairs will have the funds necessary to pay these section 1606 and 1607 benefits.

Section 526—Secretary of Defense Evaluation of the Adequacy of the Degree-Granting Authorities of Certain Military Universities and Educational Institutions

This section would require the Secretary of Defense to evaluate the degree-granting authorities of certain military universities and educational institutions to assess whether the current process remains adequate, appropriate, and responsive to meet emerging military service education requirements.

Section 527—Navy Junior Reserve Officers’ Training Corps Unit for Southold, Mattituck, and Greenport High Schools

This section would allow the Southold, Mattituck, and Greenport High Schools, located within the town of Southold in Suffolk County, New York, to be treated as a single institution for the purposes of maintaining a Navy Junior Reserve Officers’ Training Corps unit.

SUBTITLE D—GENERAL SERVICE AUTHORITIES

Section 531—Authority to Reduce Required Service Obligation for Initial Appointment of Qualified Health Professionals as Officers in Critical Specialties

This section would provide a waiver to the mandatory service obligation for a select group of experienced physicians who are willing to serve their country in uniform for at least two years. The committee recognizes that the Department of Defense faces significant

challenges recruiting qualified health professionals, particularly those with critical specialties such as surgeons, orthopedists, dentists, and nurse anesthetists. The committee notes that the Department has stated that it does not intend to reduce the mandatory service obligation for most physician accessions.

Section 532—Reenlistment in Former Enlisted Grade after Service as an Officer

This section would authorize regular officers to reenlist in their former enlisted grade when separation as an officer is under honorable conditions and the officer is otherwise qualified for enlistment.

SUBTITLE E—MILITARY JUSTICE AND LEGAL ASSISTANCE MATTERS

Section 541—Authority to Designate Certain Civilian Employees of the Federal Government as Eligible for Legal Assistance from Department of Defense Legal Staff Resources

This section would authorize the secretaries of the military departments to prescribe regulations authorizing legal assistance to designated civilian employees of the federal government serving with, or preparing to serve with, an armed service in support of a contingency operation.

SUBTITLE F—DECORATIONS AND AWARDS

Section 551—Authorization and Request for Award of Medal of Honor to Leslie H. Sabo, Jr., for Acts of Valor During the Vietnam War

This section would authorize the President to award the Medal of Honor to Leslie H. Sabo, Jr., who served in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War. This section would also waive the statutory time limitation under section 3744 of title 10, United States Code.

Section 552—Authorization and Request for Award of Medal of Honor to Henry Svehla for Acts of Valor During the Korean War

This section would authorize the President to award the Medal of Honor to Henry Svehla, who served in the U.S. Army during the Korean War. This section would also waive the statutory time limitation under section 3744 of title 10, United States Code.

Section 553—Authorization and Request for Award of Medal of Honor to Woodrow W. Keeble for Acts of Valor During the Korean War

This section would authorize the President to award the Medal of Honor to Woodrow W. Keeble, who served in the U.S. Army during the Korean War. This section would also waive the statutory time limitation under section 3744 of title 10, United States Code.

Section 554—Authorization and Request for Award of Medal of Honor to Private Philip G. Shadrach for Acts of Valor During the Civil War

This section would authorize the President to award the Medal of Honor to Private Philip G. Shadrach, who served in the U.S.

Army during the Civil War. This section would also waive the statutory time limitation under section 3744 of title 10, United States Code.

Section 555—Authorization and Request for Award of Medal of Honor to Private George D. Wilson for Acts of Valor During the Civil War

This section would authorize the President to award the Medal of Honor to Private George D. Wilson, who served in the U.S. Army during the Civil War. This section would also waive the statutory time limitation under section 3744 of title 10, United States Code.

Section 556—Cold War Victory Medal

This section would require the Secretary of Defense to design and issue a Cold War Victory Medal to a person, upon application by a service member who served honorably in the armed forces for a minimum of 180 days during the period beginning on September 2, 1945, and ending on December 26, 1991.

SUBTITLE G—IMPACT AID AND DEFENSE DEPENDENTS EDUCATION SYSTEM

Section 561—Tuition Assistance for Military Dependents in Overseas Areas Where Schools Operated by Defense Dependents' Education System Are Not Reasonably Available

This section would allow the Secretary of Defense to pay tuition for dependents in overseas areas where there are no Department of Defense schools or an adequate alternative, to attend private boarding schools in the United States, under regulations established by the Secretary.

Section 562—Continuation of Authority To Assist Local Educational Agencies that Benefit Dependents of Members of the Armed Forces and Department of Defense Civilian Employees

This section would provide \$50.0 million for assistance to local educational agencies that have military dependent students comprising at least 20 percent of the students in average daily attendance during a year. This section would also provide \$15.0 million for assistance to local educational agencies that experience significant increases or decreases in the average daily attendance of military dependent students due to military force structure changes, the relocation of military forces from one base to another, and from base closures and realignments. The committee makes this recommendation in connection with its strong continuing support of the need to help local school districts with significant concentration of military students.

SUBTITLE H—OTHER MATTERS

Section 571—Extension of Authority To Accept Gifts, Devises, or Requests to Benefit Members of the Armed Forces, Dependents, and Civilian Employees of the Department of Defense

This section would extend the authority for the Secretary of Defense to accept gifts for the benefit of members from December 31, 2007, to December 31, 2010.

Section 572—Uniform Performance Policies for Military Bands and Other Musical Units

This section would allow members of military bands or similar musical units to perform music in their personal capacities, with or without compensation, but when doing so, would require that such members act exclusively outside of their official positions. Members may neither wear their military uniforms nor use their official titles or positions and must comply with all applicable ethics rules. This section would authorize any military band or similar musical unit to produce and distribute recordings to the public at a cost that covers only production and distribution expenses. This section would also require that the funds used for recording expenses be reimbursed to the original funding source.

Section 573—Repeal of Limitation on Number of Academies of Department of Defense STARBASE Program in a Single State

This section would amend section 2193b(c) of title 10, United States Code, to repeal the limitation on the number of Starbase academies allowed per state.

Section 574—Combat Veterans Mentoring Program for Current Members of the Armed Forces

This section would require the Secretary of Defense to establish a program that provides combat veterans the opportunity to meet and mentor current members of the Armed Forces. The Secretary is required to provide opportunities for combat veterans to meet with current members before, after, and during deployments.

Section 575—Recognition of Members of the Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives Program of the Civil Affairs and Military Government Sections of the Armed Forces During and Following World War II

This section would recognize the men and women who served in the Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives program under the Civil Affairs and Military Government Sections of the United States Armed Forces for their role in the preservation, protection, and restitution of monuments, works of art, and other artifacts of cultural importance in Europe and Asia during and following World War II.

Section 576—Program To Commemorate 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War

This section would require the Secretary of Defense to conduct a program to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War and to coordinate, support, and facilitate the Vietnam War com-

memorative programs and activities of the federal government, state and local governments, and other persons and organizations that support the commemorative objectives specified in the section. This section would also authorize the program to continue through 2025, with the Secretary determining the schedule of events and priority of efforts during the duration of the program.

TITLE VI—COMPENSATION AND OTHER PERSONNEL BENEFITS

OVERVIEW

The committee continues to believe that successful recruiting and retention in a wartime environment directly depends on the close oversight of compensation and benefit programs to ensure that they remain robust, flexible, and effective. Accordingly, the committee recommends an across-the-board pay raise of 3.5 percent, one-half of one percent above pay raise levels in the private sector as measured by the Employment Cost Index (ECI). This would be the 9th consecutive year that the pay raise would exceed the ECI level and would result in an average cumulative pay increase of 46 percent over the last 9 years.

The committee also recognizes that some previously adopted compensation policies, bonuses, and special pays require modification to ensure they remain current and effective and the committee recommends a number of such adjustments. The committee also supports the proposal of the Department of Defense's Tenth Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation to consolidate and simplify the system of special and incentive pays. The committee recommends reform of those pays to make them more understandable and easier to administer.

The committee believes that more needs to be done to protect the annuities of surviving military spouses and increase retirement compensation for service members who have been retired with disabilities. The committee recommends a monthly survivor indemnity allowance of up to \$40 to partially offset the reduction in the Survivor Benefit Program annuities resulting from concurrent eligibility for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation paid by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Additionally, the committee recommends that retired service members with combat related disabilities be paid an annuity under the combat related special compensation program so long as they have at least 15 years of service.

The committee remains committed to protecting and enhancing military exchange, commissary, and morale, welfare, and recreation programs. Accordingly, the committee has included direction to examine methods for making military resale stores and morale, welfare, and recreation activities more efficient and effective programs.

ITEMS OF SPECIAL INTEREST

Base Access for Vendors Serving Military Resale Activities

The committee is disappointed that base access procedures for employees of vendors servicing military resale activities remain cumbersome and costly. The committee believes that establishing a standardized identification card that would facilitate base access on