

SENATE TURNS DOWN PROPOSAL TO LIMIT DEPLOYMENTS FOR RESERVISTS

The members of the Senate have refused attempts to limit deployments of Reserve and National Guard members, saying they are just as worried about time away from home for full-time service members.

“We ought to have some limits on overseas deployment, period,” said Sen. Ted Stevens (R-Alaska), Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee. Sen. Stevens said the entire force needs a comprehensive policy, one that takes into consideration the needs of the military and the effects of deployments on service members and their families.

“We want to specifically get some recommendations on ways to reduce the burden of overseas military deployments while maintaining military readiness, overseas presence, and supporting the national military strategy and the ability to respond to the President’s orders as commander-in-chief,” the Senator said.

The Senate, also, rejected an amendment offered by Sen. Robert C. Byrd (D-W.Va.) that would have limited Reserve call-ups to no more than 180 days. The amendment also would have promised Reservists that they would not be called more than once every 360 days. It was turned down by a 64-31 vote.

DEPLOYED RESERVISTS GIVEN BREAK ON PAYING STUDENT LOAN FEES

Reservists deployed on military operations will get a temporary reprieve from making student loan payments while they are on active duty.

President Bush signed the legislation which gives the Department of Education the authority to waive rules on repaying loans to ensure that those affected by wars, military operations, or national emergencies are not put in a worse financial condition. Under the new law, Reservists could be relieved from making loan payments while they are on active duty and away from their jobs.

The law also asks colleges to provide a full refund of tuition and fees to students whose schooling is interrupted by military service and to make it easier for those

students to reapply for admission when they return from military duty.

NO CAMPAIGN MEDALS AUTHORIZED FOR SERVICE IN AFGHANISTAN OR IRAQ

The Department of Defense has no plans to authorize separate campaign medals for combat operations in either Afghanistan or Iraq. Instead, DoD officials say, two medals established by the President in March are expected to be used – the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal and the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal.

Although DoD is still working on the details for eligibility, the Expeditionary Medal is earmarked for service in Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. The Service Medal will be authorized for duty in Operation Noble Eagle, and in support of Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom performed in geographic areas that don’t qualify for the Expeditionary Medal.

Each medal may be awarded only once, thus no distinguishing device will be authorized for more than one assignment in qualifying operations or areas.

Despite lack of DoD support, three Representatives have introduced legislation to authorize campaign medals for service in Afghanistan and Iraq. Reps. Vic Snyder (D-Ariz.), Rob Simmons (R-Conn.), and Silvestre Reyes (D-Tex.) sponsored the legislation. They were joined as original cosponsors by six Democrats and two Republicans.

RUMSFELD SENDS THANKS TO EMPLOYERS OF RESERVISTS

Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld has sent an open letter to employers, thanking them for their continued support of their National Guard and Reserve employees who have been called to active duty to support the Global War on Terrorism.

In the letter, Secretary Rumsfeld said that the ongoing Global War on Terrorism – for which the Defense Department has mobilized more than 295,000 members of the Reserve Components since 11 Sept. 2001 – “would not have been possible without the strong backing of America’s

employers.”

The letters were sent to the directors of major employer associations and organizations and of government agencies. They, in turn, were asked to distribute the letters to their members.

Their Reserve and Guard employees, Secretary Rumsfeld told the employers, “have been engaged in and around the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as providing security here at home and in other critical locations around the world.”

The Secretary thanked the employers for “swiftly releasing your valuable employees for military service” and “welcoming back these returning warriors and reinstating them in their jobs.”

FORE AND AFT:

Monthly payments to the 136 living holders of the Medal of Honor have been raised from \$600 monthly to \$1,000 a month . . . Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony J. Principi has announced that, for the first time in its history, the Department of Veterans Affairs is providing grants to organizations that care for homeless veterans in all 50 states and the District of Columbia . . .

According to a published report, Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld has told associates he wants to close about 100 of the remaining 426 military installations in the United States during the next round of base closures scheduled to take place in 2005 . . . As of 21 October, there were 88,156 members of the Naval Selected Reserve; 152,855 in the Ready Reserve; and 2,979 Naval Reservists on active duty. The Navy’s active duty strength was 380,945 – 55,050 officers; 321,597 enlisteds; and 4,298 midshipmen . . .

A new American Military Spouse Award is being sponsored by Procter & Gamble Military Markets. It will be bestowed upon four recipients who have demonstrated exceptional volunteer accomplishments, selfless giving to others in the community, and the ability to sustain the home front during long deployments and times of family separation. ¶