

Statement by

HON. MICHAEL K. SIMPSON
OF IDAHO

Before the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity

Committee on Veterans Affairs

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Regarding

H.R. 1207, the Department of Veterans Affairs Work-Study Act of 2005

Good Afternoon, Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before your Subcommittee to discuss my legislation H.R. 1207, the Department of Veterans Affairs Work-Study Act of 2005, which will expand work-study opportunities for veteran-students.

Mr. Chairman, the work-study program provides veteran-students an opportunity to earn additional funds each semester while gaining valuable work experience. Current law authorizes a work-study program for any student receiving VA education or vocational rehabilitation benefits; however, the current restrictions for “acceptable” work-study services are too limiting. Under current law, the veteran-student may only perform services in support of veterans programs at VA regional offices, medical centers, or national cemeteries; at college and university veterans’ affairs offices; or by conducting outreach services under the supervision of a VA employee or a state approving agency. These limiting parameters for acceptable work-study services restrict the number of positions available to eligible veterans and keep veterans from having the opportunity to earn supplemental financial assistance while gaining valuable work experience. Limited work-study opportunities are particularly true at campuses not located near VA facilities.

The VA Work-Study Act would expand work-study opportunities to include vocational rehabilitation program employment services at an educational institution, Transition Assistance Program and Disabled Transition Assistance Program counseling, training and employment services under the supervision of Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist and Local Veterans Employment Representatives, or services in support of ROTC programs at educational institutions or military installations. Expansion of the VA work-study program compliments the intent of previous legislation I introduced, Public Law 107-288, the Jobs for Veterans Act of 2002. Like the Jobs for Veterans Act, this bill would enhance a veteran’s opportunity for job placement following college.

This bill also creates a 5-year pilot program to test expanding the scope of acceptable work-study services a step further. In the pilot program, veterans would be afforded more opportunities for work-study positions at the institution of higher learning where they are pursuing their degree programs. Employment positions in academic departments and in student services would be eligible, subject to the approval of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

Mr. Chairman, this legislation would expand work-study opportunities for veteran-students and enhance the veteran's opportunity for job placement following college. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before the Subcommittee to discuss my legislation and answer any questions you may have.