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STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

of

**Richard “Rick” Jones
AMVETS National Legislative Director**

before the

**Committee on Veterans’ Affairs
Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity
U.S. House of Representatives**

on

**H.R. 419, The Hire Veterans Act of 2004; The Homeless
Veterans Reintegration Program reauthorization Act of
2005; The Servicemembers Health Insurance Protection
Act of 2005; and, The Servicemembers Taxation
Protection Act of 2005**

**Wednesday, May 4, 2005
334 Cannon House Office Building**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

H.R. 419, the Hire Veterans Act of 2004:

- H.R. 419, the Hire Veterans Act of 2004, would extend the operation of the President's national hire veterans committee to December 31, 2008, from its currently schedule sunset of December 31, 2005. AMVETS is greatly disappointed in the record of the current national hire veterans committee.
- AMVETS expresses concern that H.R. 419 would fund the work of the President's national hire veterans committee from funds dedicated to the Department of Labor for administration of the Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVER) programs.
- AMVETS believes it would be a mistake to take resources from an effective DOL-VETS program to fund the National Hire Veterans Committee.

Draft Legislation to Reauthorize the Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program (HVRP):

- AMVETS supports reauthorization of HVRP. It has been a very successful program, broadly supported by local community groups and veterans service organizations.
- AMVETS would like to see the reauthorization bill increase the authorized funding level to \$70 million from the \$50 million level contained in the current draft bill.
- Competition for current grants is intense, and we believe additional authorization would be helpful.

Draft Legislation The Service Members Health Insurance Protection Act of 2005:

- AMVETS supports the intent of the draft bill to relieve servicemembers from unfounded increases in health care premiums but does not believe that private insurers should shoulder the care of an injury or illness resulting from military service, a responsibility of the Federal government.

Draft Legislation The Servicemembers Taxation Protection Act of 2005:

- AMVETS fully supports the legislation.

Chairman Boozman, Ranking Member Herseth, and members of the Subcommittee:

On behalf of AMVETS National Commander William A. Boettcher and the nationwide membership of AMVETS, I am pleased to offer our views to the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity regarding the H.R. 419, the Hire Veterans Act of 2004, and related legislative issues before the panel. Thank you for this opportunity.

Mr. Chairman, H.R. 419, the Hire Veterans Act of 2004, would extend the operation of the President's national hire veterans committee to December 31, 2008, from its currently scheduled sunset of December 31, 2005. Very frankly, while we support efforts to enhance the profile of America's commitment to its veterans, we are greatly disappointed in the established record of the current national hire veterans committee. We are aware of no official account of its past achievements and the committee's reports of 2003 and 2004 offer little insight as to any substantial gain made by the committee in veterans' employment.

Further we are concerned that H.R. 419 would fund the work of the President's national hire veterans committee from funds dedicated to the Department of Labor for administration of the Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVER) programs. If the House Committee believes the national committee should be extended, AMVETS would hope that consideration would be given to finding a separate funding source other than the DVOP and LVER programs. The heart and soul of the Labor's Veterans Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS) efforts is the dedicated DVOPs and LVERs tasked with facing the employment challenges of hard-to-place veterans. Taking resources from an effective DOL-VETS program to fund one that is not would be a mistake that we trust the Veterans' Affairs Committee would avoid.

On a second matter, the members of AMVETS strongly support draft legislation to reauthorize the Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program (HVRP).

The purpose of HVRP is to offer homeless veterans a chance to regain a foothold in the nation's employment sector. It is a welcome help to many veterans who face a complex of problems in finding gainful work. Grants made through HVRP provide homeless veterans with occupational training, job search, and placement assistance. HVRP has been a very successful program, broadly supported by local community groups and veterans service organizations. From its outset, this program has offered a partnership with local agencies and other State and Federal programs to improve the lives of veterans and their families.

With reports of as many as 250,000 veterans homeless on any given day, AMVETS would like to see the reauthorization bill increase the authorized funding level to \$70 million from the \$50 million level contained in the current draft bill. The competition for current grants is intense and many of the organizations competing for limited resources fail to win an advance of funds not because their programs are ineffective but because there isn't enough in the program. We believe the money would be well spent in helping veterans find the hope they need to improve their lives.

With regard to the Service Members Health Insurance Protection Act of 2005, AMVETS supports the intent of the draft bill but has concerns about the possible adverse impact on private insurance carriers. We firmly believe that the healthcare needs of veterans are a clear responsibility of the Federal government. We do not believe that private insurers should shoulder the care of an injury or illness resulting from military service. While we would like to protect the possibility of returning troops finding steep increases in their private healthcare insurance due to non-military related circumstances, we do not want private insurance to carry the national burden of health care for military personnel. Without congressional hearings on this matter aimed at uncovering the circumstances that consort to the development of this draft legislation, AMVETS does not support its approval.

On the final draft bill before the panel, the Servicemembers Taxation Protection Act of 2005, AMVETS fully supports the legislation. When servicemembers relocate, items subject to personal property tax, excise tax, use tax, or sales tax should not be twice or more applied. No one currently serving their country in military service should face a penalty simply because they change duty

station as ordered.

Again, AMVETS looks forward to working with the Subcommittee on these matters, and we appreciate your efforts to enhance and improve the services and benefits earned by those who serve in America's Armed Forces.



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May 4, 2005

The Honorable John Boozman, Chairman
Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity
House Veterans' Affairs Committee
Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Boozman:

Neither AMVETS nor I have received any federal grants or contracts, during this year or in the last two years, from any agency or program relevant to the May 4, 2005, Subcommittee hearing on the draft legislation before the panel.

Sincerely,

Richard Jones
National Legislative Director



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**Richard “Rick” Jones
National Legislative Director**

Richard “Rick” Jones joined AMVETS as the National Legislative Director on January 4, 2001. As legislative director, he is the primary individual responsible for promoting AMVETS legislative, national security, and foreign affairs goals before the Departments of State, Defense, and Veterans Affairs, and the Congress of the United States.

Rick is an Army veteran who served as a medical specialist during the Vietnam War era. His assignments included duty at Brooke General Hospital in San Antonio, Texas; Fitzsimons General Hospital in Denver, Colorado; and Moncrief Community Hospital in Columbia, South Carolina. At Moncrief Hospital, Rick was selected to assist in processing the first members of the all-volunteer Army.

Rick completed undergraduate work at Brown University prior to his Army draft and earned a Master Degree in Public Administration from East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina, following military service.

Prior to assuming his current position, Rick worked nearly twenty years as a legislative staff aide in the offices of Senator Paul Coverdell, Senator Lauch Faircloth, and Senator John P. East. He also worked in the House of Representatives as committee staff for Representative Larry J. Hopkins and Representative Bob Stump.

In working for Chairman Stump on the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs, he served two years as Republican minority staff director for the subcommittee on housing and memorial affairs and two years as Republican majority professional staff on funding issues related to veterans affairs’ budget and appropriations.

Rick and his wife Nancy have three children, Sarah, Katherine, and David, and reside in Springfield, Virginia.

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