

Rep. Doris Matsui Amendment Included in Department of Defense Authorization; Will Assist Local Veteran of Iraq War

The bill included an amendment from Rep. Doris Matsui (CA-05) that grew out of a local Iraq War veteran's difficulty receiving education benefits he was promised when he enlisted.

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Today, the House passed S. 3001, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009. The bill included an amendment from Rep. Doris Matsui (CA-05) that grew out of a local Iraq War veteran's difficulty receiving education benefits he was promised when he enlisted.

"My amendment will help American servicemembers receive the educational benefits they were promised. The Pentagon cannot use backdoor legal tactics to deny these soldiers what they have earned and deserve," said Rep. Matsui. "We owe nothing less to the men and women who have risked their lives in defense of our country."

Congresswoman Matsui's constituent, Sgt. Jeremiah Anderson, came to the Congresswoman in March, 2008 after losing an appeal at an Army appeals board. After serving in Iraq, he returned home to get his college degree, using the money he was promised through the Army College Fund. However, his enlistment contract was misleading and as a result, Sergeant Anderson received less money for his education than he was promised.

Sgt. Anderson, who is married and has a young son, is a junior at California State University, Sacramento (CSUS) majoring in history. Even though the Army admitted Sgt. Anderson's contract was misleading, they denied his appeal for his full Army College Fund benefit. Congresswoman Matsui's amendment will give affected servicemembers until December of 2009 to re-apply for full payment of their Army College Fund benefits in accordance with the terms of their enlistment contracts.

"The Department has admitted that contracts like Sergeant Anderson's were misleading. They agree that he should receive the full amount of his education benefit. Yet they would not help Sgt. Anderson and others who found themselves in similar situations. My amendment will give these soldiers the education benefits they were promised," said Congresswoman Matsui.

The Defense Authorization bill passed this afternoon by a vote of 392-39. In addition to helping individuals like Sgt. Anderson, the bill authorizes \$531.4 billion in budget authority for the Department of Defense and the national security programs of the Department of Energy. The bill includes a 3.9 percent pay raise for soldiers and prohibits increases in TRICARE and pharmacy user fees. Additional provisions address preventive healthcare, suicide prevention and career development for military spouses.

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