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February 9, 2016

The Honorable Jeff Miller, Chairman
House Veterans' Affairs Committee
335 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Miller:

On behalf of DAV (Disabled American Veterans), a Congressionally chartered national veterans service organization of 1.3 million members who were injured or made ill by military service, I write in reference to our positions on legislative proposals contained within H.R. 3016, the Veterans Employment, Education, and Healthcare Improvement Act.

DAV supports Title I of this bill, which would re-classify Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) podiatrists as VA physicians; make appropriate adjustments to compensation paid to podiatrists; elevate the priority of Medal of Honor awardees for VA health care services; expand VA hospital days of authorized care for the newborn children of veterans; it would authorize an audit of the VA health care budget by the Government Accountability Office; improve outreach to veterans in cases of delayed payments for certain health care services by the VA Chief Business Office; and establish a therapeutic dog training pilot program. Our support for this title is hinged on DAV's National Resolution Nos. 104, 125, 126, 224 and 236, a series of health-related resolutions adopted by our membership at our most recent national convention. The provisions in this title are fully consistent with the intent of these resolutions, and with DAV's prior testimony before your Committee on most of these provisions.

DAV also strongly supports Title II of this bill on the strength of National Resolution No. 236, which urges the Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS) of the Department of Labor be transferred to VA, and to establish as a new Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition Administration in the VA.

Although our resolution specifically calls on Congress to transfer the programs and functions of DOL VETS to VA as a fourth administration, creating a new Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition Administration alone has the potential to greatly improve employment and educational opportunities for veterans by consolidating various VA programs now managed by the Veterans Benefits Administration, such as the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment program, into a new administration focused on improving the economic prospects of veterans.

The creation of a new VA administration to manage all veteran employment and training-related programs is a logical, responsible step for Congress to streamline and enhance the prospects and training possibilities for those who served.

Ensuring that our nation's injured and ill wartime veterans and their families receive opportunities for meaningful and gainful employment is a central concern of our organization, and we have been pleased to work with the Committee on this issue. This legislation could strengthen the ability of many veterans to overcome employment obstacles and open up new opportunities for them in their post-service lives.

Titles III, IV and V of this bill deal with changes in educational assistance, vocational rehabilitation, home loans, job counseling, small business matters, and VA's relations with state veterans agencies. DAV's previous positions on these legislative proposals have not changed.

We appreciate your leadership in bringing together this omnibus bill that holds the potential to improve the lives of veterans injured or made ill by their military service.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Garry J. Augustine". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial "G".

GARRY J. AUGUSTINE
Executive Director
Washington Headquarters

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