

Washington, DC (May 31, 2012) – Legislation introduced by Representatives Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), Bill Owens (D-NY), and Tim Walz (D-MN) that would expand job protection for members of the Armed Forces passed the House floor today by a bipartisan voice vote. The bill, H.R. 3670, requires the Transportation Security Administration to comply with the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA). USERRA guarantees that employees in both the public and private sector who are called to active duty can return to their jobs when they come home.

"When our National Guard and reservists are called to duty, it is our duty to ensure that they have the peace of mind of knowing that their jobs are secure when they return," **said Bilirakis, who is Vice Chairman of the Veterans Affairs Committee**

. "This legislation is a necessary step in supporting those who sign on to protect our nation and ensure our freedoms."

"A critical part of the obligation we have to support the troops includes ensuring a stable economic condition when they return from military service," said Rep. Owens, a veteran of the Air Force. "When Americans are deployed with the Armed Forces, they should not have to worry that they might be fired simply for being away on duty. This bipartisan legislation protects the jobs of American service members by ensuring that a call to serve doesn't amount to a pink slip for officers of the Transportation Security Administration, and I am pleased it passed the House floor today."

"The unemployment rate among our service members is already far too high. Protecting the jobs they already have should be a top priority and I'm pleased the House took action on this common sense bill today," said Walz, a 24 year veteran of the National Guard. "We have USERRA protections in place for a reason and this bill simply ensures that the thousands of veterans, reservists, and members of the National Guard working for TSA are protected as they would be in any other position."

As it moved through the House, H.R. 3670 had the support of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) and the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW). VADM Norb Ryan, USN (ret.), President of the MOAA, applauded the passage of the Reemployment Rights bill for National

Guard and Reserve members employed by the Transportation Security Agency.

"It's critical for the Federal government to be seen as a model employer for our Operational Guard and Reserve warriors, especially because the nation relies on them more than ever to help defend our nation," said Ryan. "MOAA strongly supports enactment of this legislation that will ensure all Reservists who work for the Federal government are equally protected under the USERRA."

"National security concerns allowed for a TSA to forego USERRA protection in its inception. But it is time to close this loophole, and provide our National Guard and reservists who chose to protect us both in military and civilian uniforms security from losing their jobs when they are called to active military service," said Raymond Kelley, Legislative Director for the VFW, "This bill is a win-win for our Guard and reservists and the TSA. Our servicemembers will be protected and TSA will be able to more easily recruit our highly trained and reliable veterans who still serve our nation part-time."

Currently, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) says it complies with USERRA voluntarily. However, at least two Transportation Security Officers (TSOs) have tried and failed to appeal TSA actions under USERRA. Both the Office of Special Counsel and Merit Systems Protection Board ruled TSOs were barred from USERRA coverage under the Aviation and Transportation Security Act.