

H.R. 23, as amended
Belated Thank You to the Merchant Mariners of World War II Act of 2009

Title: To amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a Merchant Mariner Equity Compensation Fund to provide benefits to certain individuals who served in the United States Merchant Marine (including the Army Transport Service and the Naval Transport Service) during World War II.

Mr. Filner of California introduced H.R. 23 on January 6, 2009.

H.R. 23, as amended, would:

1. Establish a Merchant Mariner Equity Compensation Fund (compensation fund) in the general fund of the U.S. Treasury and directs the Secretary of the VA to make monthly payments in the amount of \$1,000 to qualifying members of the United States Merchant Marine on a first-come, first-served basis, who served during World War II (including qualifying members of the Army Transport and the Naval Transport Service).
2. Make funds available in the compensation fund subject to the availability of appropriations (discretionary), and make the amounts in the compensation fund available to the Secretary of the VA to distribute payments to eligible individuals at any time and over a period of five years.
3. Require qualifying Merchant Mariners (including the Army Transport Service and the Naval Transport Service), who have not already received benefits under the 1944 GI Bill (Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (P.L. 78-346)), to submit an application containing information as required by the Secretary within one year of the date of enactment.
4. Require the Secretary to recognize the qualifying service of all those who served in the United States Merchant Marine (including the Army Transport Service and the Naval Transport Service) during the period of December 7, 1941 and December 31, 1946.
5. Require the Secretary to make a monthly payment of \$1,000 out of the compensation fund to eligible Merchant Mariners in the order of receipt of applications.
6. Authorize appropriations in the amount of \$120 million in FY10; \$108 million in FY11; \$97 million in FY12; \$85million in FY13; and \$75 million in FY14 for the compensation fund.
7. Require carryover – that appropriations remain available until expended.
8. Require the Secretary to submit an annual report to Congress with the President's budget each fiscal year that will contain information about the operation of the compensation fund, including, but not limited to, the number of applicants, the number of eligible individuals receiving benefits, the amounts paid out of and administration of the compensation fund and an estimate of necessary amounts to fully fund the compensation fund for that fiscal year and three subsequent fiscal years.
9. Require the Secretary to issue regulations 180 days after the date of enactment.

Effective Date: Date of Enactment

Cost: CBO estimates that implementing H.R. 23 would cost \$120 million in 2010 and \$485 million over the 2010-2014 period, assuming appropriation of the authorized amounts contained in the bill.

Legislative History:

May 6, 2009: Ordered reported, amended, by the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

May 7, 2009: Reported, as amended, H. Rept. 111-99.

May 12, 2009: Passed the House under suspension by voice vote.