



Paralyzed Veterans of America

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Chartered by the Congress of the United States

March 10, 2016

Honorable Charles Grassley, Chairman
United States Senate Committee on the Judiciary
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Honorable Richard Durbin, Democratic Whip
United States Senate
711 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Grassley and Durbin:

On behalf of Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), I offer you our support for the “Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act of 2015” (S. 2123). Specifically, Section 208(c) (“Facilitating Re-entry Assistance to Veterans”) provides Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) employees or representatives reasonable access to prisoners identified as veterans by the Bureau of Prisons (BoP). Reducing recidivism among veterans and ensuring that they re-enter society as productive citizens is at the heart of this provision.

Giving VA the ability to reach these prisoners prior to release ensures that transitioning veterans are capitalizing on all available benefits when they get out. A veteran utilizing resources such as mental health care, substance abuse treatment and education benefits significantly increases the likelihood of successful re-entry into society. Additionally, because veteran status tends to be viewed favorably from the bench during sentencing, prisoners have every incentive at the pre-sentence report stage to self-identify. Pre-sentence reports are thoroughly conducted investigations into an offender’s personal circumstances and provide a trustworthy, pre-existing platform for identifying veterans at the earliest possible stage of incarceration. As BoP strives with limited resources to implement re-entry programs throughout its infrastructure, VA efforts in this arena will be a welcome addition to the system and would prevent veterans from falling through the cracks. Most importantly, this provision gives transitioning veterans a better chance at walking out with their head held high again.

We appreciate your commitment to this issue. If we can be of further assistance, please contact my staff member, Gabe Stultz, at (202) 416-7748.

Respectfully,

Carl Blake
Associate Executive Director for Government Relations
Paralyzed Veterans of America