

Congress Passes Law Creating ID Card for Veterans



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Congress has approved the creation of a veterans' identification card, making it easier for veterans to prove military service without having to produce a military service record or some other valuable document.

The House had already passed the bill in June and sent it on to the Senate. The Senate also passed the legislation, but a [minor clerical amendment](#) required a second House vote, which it took late Tuesday afternoon.

"Today is a good day for our nation's [veterans](#)," said bill sponsor Rep. Vern Buchanan, R-Florida. "This bill is a prime example of what we can accomplish when we put partisanship aside and the needs of the country first."

Both House votes and the Senate vote were unanimous. The bill now heads to the White House where President Obama is expected to sign it.

Buchanan currently serves on the House Ways and Means Committee, but previously served on the House Veterans Affairs Committee.

Currently, individuals needing to prove military status routinely have to provide a DD-214, a Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty, to prove their status, said Vietnam-era veteran Donald DiNunzio of Florida.

"I have been asked many times to prove that I am a vet but carrying around my DD-214 form is difficult and impractical," he said. "My DD-214 form is a large 8.5 x 11 carbon copy, delicate, old and quite brittle and thin. Having a permanent veteran ID card would be a much simpler way of proudly proving my veteran status."

A number of states, and even counties, will issue veterans ID cards. Among the states that do so are Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Texas, North Carolina, Virginia and Michigan, which retailers and restaurants will accept when offering veterans' discounts, according to The American Legion.

The bill text references these kinds of benefits to veterans, but also notes its usefulness in proving veteran status "without having to carry and use official Department of Defense form DD-214 discharge papers."

Retired service members have long been issued IDs. The [Veterans Affairs Department issues IDs](#) to veterans who are enrolled in VA [health care](#).

The veteran ID card had support from a number of veterans' organizations, including AMVETS, Vietnam Veterans of America and Concerned Veterans of America.

But the Veterans of Foreign Wars believes demand for the new card is unnecessary and will only burden an already backlogged VA bureaucracy, which is the agency designated to issue the cards.

VFW national spokesman Joe Davis said there will now be a new demand on the VA to process and issue the cards to millions of veterans who do not require or need VA care. That means time and manpower devoted to verifying honorable discharges.

"The states have the authority to indicate veteran [status] on driver's licenses and voter IDs," Davis said. "It would have been far simpler to have left the responsibility with them."

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